THE

FAMILY-PREACHER:

CONSISTING OF

Practical Diſcourſes

FOR

every SUNDAY throughout the YEAR:

AS ALSO FOR

CHRISTMAS-DAY, GOOD-FRIDAY,

and other

SOLEMN OCCASIONS.

THE GREATER PART ORIGINALS NEVER BEFORE PRINTED.

By D. BELLAMY, M. A.

CHAPLAIN of KEW and PETERSHAM in the COUNTY of SURREY.

My intention is to give the World, or at leaſt that part of the World which I have the honour to Inſtruct, a right notion of Religion in general, and a juſt Character of thoſe Cardinal Virtues which ſupport it, without deſcending to thoſe particular points which divide it. *HICKMAN.*

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CANST THOU BY SEARCHING FIND OUT GOD? CANST THOU FIND OUT THE ALMIGHTY TO PERFECTION?

IT IS AS HIGH AS HEAVEN—WHAT CANST THOU DO? DEEPER THAN HELL, WHAT CANST THOU KNOW?

NOtwithſtanding the variety of beauteous ſcenes that ſurround us—notwithſtanding the ample volume of creation plainly points out to man, the great, the infinitely gracious God that made him; yet the ſacred ſcriptures give us a more awful and adequate idea of his divine attributes. Indeed the writings of the inſpired Penmen not only contribute very largely towards our reading with judgment, and forming worthy ideas of the beauties of the univerſe: but moreover, ſhould we unfortunately entertain wrong conceptions of the Deity, thoſe ſacred ſcriptures will correct them, and ſupply us with true, ſolid, and juſt notions, concerning him. By their aid and aſſiſtance, as by an infallible clue, we ſhall be led with greater ſafety into our knowledge of the Deity, and be preſerved from becoming vain, like the Gentiles in our imaginations of that tremendous Being. From a ſerious peruſal of the ſacred volume, we ſhall be reſcued from thoſe errors and miſtakes concerning the divine nature, which, without ſuch

illumination, however converſant in human learning we may poſſibly be, we ſhould moſt unavoidably run into for want of penetration.

Amongſt many other articles in relation to the Almighty, the ſacred ſcriptures inform us, that his underſtanding is infinite, and his ways paſt finding out—" Canſt thou by ſearching, ſays holy Job, " find out God? Canſt thou find out the Almighty to perfection? " It is as high as heaven—what canſt thou do? Deeper than hell " what canſt thou know?"—This great, this inſtructive, this uſeful aſſertion naturally begets in us a holy modeſty, and a reverential dread in all our reſearches after his divine attributes.

It may be objected, that ſince this text in direct terms aſſerts, that we cannot by ſearching find out God—it ſeems at leaſt to prohibit every attempt to pry into ſo profound a myſtery as the nature and eſſence of the Deity—it ſtrongly recommends our humble acquieſcence in, and ſilent veneration of ſuch things as are ſo far above the reach of our weak and finite comprehenſions. To this it may be anſwered, that though an attempt to inveſtigate or delineate ſuch things, as are altogether incomprehenſible, is preſumptuous, wicked, abſurd: yet to look ſoberly and modeſtly into ſuch things as God has graciouſly vouchſafed to reveal to us in his ſacred ſcriptures, though we are fully ſenſible we can never conceive any perfect idea of them, and ſo far as ſuch knowledge may be uſeful and advantageous to us, is not only allowable and praiſe-worthy, but a duty incumbent upon us—peradventure the beſt, the nobleſt uſe we can poſſibly make of our rational faculties, and therefore we heſitate not to aſſert, that diſcourſes on ſuch ſubjects as theſe may juſtly claim your attention; may be as ſerviceable to the cauſe of religion and virtue, as thoſe that are plainer. For ſurely, to inſpire our hearers with an awful idea of the majeſty of the Lord Jehovah, will be a great ſtep towards perſuading them to live holy and virtuous

tuous lives, which alone can diſtinguiſh the ſincere believers from thoſe ſons and daughters of riot, diſſipation, and luxury, which in theſe our days diſgrace human nature, grieve the virtuous, and fill our land with diſcontent and unhappineſs.

It is moſt undoubtedly true, that our weak and finite comprehenſions are altogether incapable of forming any juſt idea of God, as he is in himſelf—we ſhall therefore only diſcourſe of him by way of compariſon with man, who is a faint image of the Deity; and ſhew in what reſpects, and in how many ways he infinitely tranſcends and exceeds him.

Though it muſt be allowed, that the human ſpecies are not endowed with that activity and vigour which ſome of the inhabitants of the air, or the beaſts of the field can exert at pleaſure—though man makes his entrance into the world in a helpleſs ſtate and condition; though he can boaſt of no plumage with the one, nor no natural weapons for his defence with the other; yet ſince he is endowed with reaſon by his indulgent Creator—he is rich in himſelf and plentifully provided with all the accommodations he ſtands in need of.—By this faculty he is taught, that whatever the creatures round about him enjoy, is devoted to his ſervice; that in effect they are all his ſlaves; and that their lives and actions are wholly at his diſpoſal. This ſuperior faculty of his not only makes the creatures, but even things inanimate ſubſervient to his will: his reaſon makes the ſtatelieſt oaks deſcend from the mountains, and obliges the moſt maſſive ſtones to ſtart from their ſubterraneous caverns, to furniſh him with a commodious habitation. Is he inclined to traverſe the ocean, and pay a viſit to the moſt diſtant countries, he makes the very winds and waters contribute to his ſervice. In a word, by his rational faculties, every object that ſurrounds him is ſubject to his directions.

As diminutive a creature as man is, his reaſon confers on him a power which is ſcarcely circumſcribed by that earth which he in-

habits. He brings the two extremities of the globe together—ſettles a correſpondence between them, without ſtirring from his cloſet. His thoughts are painted as it were in his letters, which without the leaſt inconvenience to himſelf, are conveyed from one nation to another—give intimation of his will to his correſpondents, who are perhaps, two or three thouſand leagues diſtant from him. Reaſon is not to be traced through all her wonders. Reaſon improves and embelliſhes all ſtates and conditions whatſoever, and her influence is no leſs to be admired in the dexterity and addreſs of an artizan, where ſhe appears a fund of beauty and convenience, than in the converſation and compoſitions of the learned, where ſhe proves an inexhauſtible ſource of inſtruction and relief, of conſolation and delight.

How rich then, how noble, how juſtly to be admired is this endowment, this faculty of our ſouls! However, could ten thouſand times more be advanced in its favour than what has been urged already, were we never ſo profuſe and laviſh in our encomiums; yet—what is the human underſtanding in its utmoſt elevation, if once put in competition with the wiſdom of the Almighty? There is no more compariſon in reality between them, than there is between the faint and glimmering light which the glow-worm emits amidſt gloomy darkneſs, and the moſt piercing and refulgent beams of the ſun in all its noon-day ſplendor. And this will more conſpicuouſly appear, if we will but ſeriouſly reflect on the object or matter of our knowledge, and from compariſon form our judgment.

There are but few particulars that come within our conſideration; but the extenſive knowledge of the moſt high, not only graſps and takes in whatever once had, or hereafter ſhall have a being, but things paſt and to come are all within the limits of his proſpect. Man knows nothing but what is near and round about him, and ſome few

few diſtant things, indeed, with which he is acquainted only by report; but every tranſaction that occurs throughout the whole univerſe, is familiar and well known to God; there is not one ſingle leaf of a tree, one flower of the field, the leaſt blade of graſs upon the ground, or the leaſt ſand on the ſea-ſhore, but is known to God, and obvious to his eye. We may therefore juſtly ſay of them as the Pſalmiſt does on the ſame occaſion, with reſpect to the infinite number of ſtars which embelliſh the firmament, that God tells the number of them, and calls them all by their reſpective names.

As to things paſt, man knows much leſs of them than of the preſent. There are more volumes indeed written of the hiſtories of former times than are poſſible for diligence itſelf ever to read over, but could it be poſſible for any one to read, nay firmly to imprint them in his memory—yet what would this amount to in compariſon of that which comprehends all things paſt? were our hiſtorians accurately particular in their relations, yet what they tranſmit to poſterity will bear no more proportion to what they paſs over in ſilence, than a handful of duſt would to that which covers the moſt extenſive mountain. Whereas, not only all the perſons that ever lived upon the face of the earth, from the creation of the world to this very day, but their words, actions, and very thoughts are as well known to the Almighty, and lie as open to the view of his omniſcience, as the moſt obvious being that is now exiſting.

As to future events—man is ſtill more at a loſs—he knows but little of what is hid in the dark abyſs of time. There are ſome few things indeed, which we may diſcern in their natural cauſes, and a few others, which we are aſſured by the holy Spirit, in the ſacred ſcriptures, ſhall unavoidably come to paſs, though independant on any natural cauſes; and this is the utmoſt extent, the fartheſt limits of human knowledge. As to the much greater part of future contingences, they are wholly concealed from our eyes, even of

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ſuch matters, wherein we ſeem, at leaſt, moſt nearly concerned. Who, for inſtance, can abſolutely determine what ſhall become of his eſtate after his deceaſe. A man heapeth up riches, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, and knoweth not who ſhall gather them. He plants orchards and vineyards, but can never foreſee who they are that ſhall reap the fruit of them. Whereas all future events are known to God, whatever ſhall be tranſacted to the end of time, nay to all eternity. He calls the things that are not, ſaith the Apoſtle St. Paul, as if they were. He ſpeaks of things to come in the ſame ſtile as if they were actually in being. Nay, this foreknowledge inherent in the Deity, extends even to ſuch things, which if any could, one would imagine might ſeem to be excluded. He underſtands, ſays the Pſalmiſt, our thoughts afar off.—We ſhall add but one inſtance more with reſpect to the object of God's knowledge, and that is, that he doth not only know all things paſt, preſent, and to come; but he knows alſo whatever lies within the boundleſs verge of his omnipotency; whatever is poſſible, and might be effected by his almighty power if he ſaw convenient. God could doubtleſs have created ten thouſand millions of worlds with as much eaſe as he made this, had it been conſiſtent with his pleaſure, and conſtituted in each of them a far greater variety of creatures to inhabit them. And indeed, who ſhould dare to affirm the contrary? Who ſhould preſume to ſet bounds to God's omnipotency, and ſay, hitherto it ſhall reach, and no farther?

Man gathers and collects one thing from another, and ſometimes is forced to take a tedious tour before he can make out to ſatisfaction thoſe concluſions which he aims at; and this is wholly to be imputed to the weakneſs and imperfection of his underſtanding: becauſe he cannot ſee things immediately and at one view, but muſt ſurvey them by reflection. As this manner of knowledge is tedious and painful, ſo it is very fallible and uncertain; whereas the knowledge

ledge of God is by one immediate glance of his all-ſeeing eye. In the ſame moment, by his infinite underſtanding, he fully comprehends not only what has been from the beginning of the world to this day, but whatever ſhall be hereafter, either in this world, or that which is to come.

Another difference between God's knowledge and man's, is with reſpect to their ſeveral meaſures and degrees. So weak is human knowledge, that there is not one ſingle creature in the univerſe, that the wiſeſt philoſopher can ſay, without vanity and preſumption, that he knows it to perfection. Take the leaſt fly that expands its wings in the open air, or the moſt minute inſect that crawls upon the earth, and there are ſuch myſteries, ſuch wondrous ſecrets in its formation, properties, and various operations, as are too profound for the moſt penetrating naturaliſt to reſolve or account for. On the other hand, God knows all things with a moſt perfect and comprehenſive knowledge. He thoroughly knows the compoſition, properties, virtues, and operations of all things whatever. That theſe aſſertions are not mere declamation, but ſerious and uncontrovertible truths, a moment's pauſe will convince even obſtinacy itſelf, for it is impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe, ſince they are only what he made them: every created being received its exiſtence, its principles, its virtues, its faculties, from him alone. We very readily allow any curious artificer to underſtand his own workmanſhip, with much more reaſon then muſt we aſcribe unto God the perfect knowledge of every production that his all-gracious goodneſs has ſent forth into this breathing world. We ſee only a little of the external part of things, but God ſees into them, and through them. To the eye of the Almighty all things are tranſparent. There is not any creature, ſays St. Paul, that is not manifeſt in his ſight. All things are naked and open in the ſight of him with whom we have to do.

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In concluſion—if there be in reality ſuch an infinite difference between our nature, and that of the ſupreme Being; it ſhould fill our minds with the higheſt admiration of God's infinite perfections, and oblige us to fall down, and pay our tribute of divine adoration to him, whoſe knowledge is ſo tranſcendent, ſo infinitely beyond the reach of our moſt exalted comprehenſions. Thus the Pſalmiſt after he had been expatiating on this ſublime and important ſubject —with enthuſiaſtic rapture pronounces, ſuch knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain to it. And thus likewiſe the Apoſtle St. Paul, in diſcourſing to the Hebrews upon a like occaſion, breaks out into the following exclamation: Oh! the depth both of the wiſdom and of the knowledge of God! and yet theſe are but a ſmall portion of his incomprehenſible knowledge. God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all; he is perfect in knowledge, and knoweth all things—His underſtanding is infinite. Canſt thou by ſearching, ſays Zopher, find out God? Canſt thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven—what canſt thou do? deeper than hell,—what canſt thou know?

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN!

The doctrine we have been enforcing, if happily it met with your attention, will afford the following ſhort leſſon of inſtruction: namely, that ſeeing the difference or diſtance between our powers and our knowledge, and that of the divine nature, is in every point of view ſo infinite: we ought to humble every particle of pride by a ſerious reflection on our own ignorance and weakneſs; and above all we ſhould be modeſt and ſober in our reſearches with relation to the Deity. We ought ever to bear in mind how perplexed we are in our notions concerning the things near and round about us. What wonder then if we be loſt and bewildered in our notions of the ſupreme Being. All that is neceſſary for man to know in his mortal ſtate is plainly ſet forth in the ſacred volume. The holy ſcriptures

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are ſure guides in ſuch abſtruſe enquiries, and they plainly inſtruct us in all things neceſſary to our ſalvation.

" Do thou then, O bleſſed Lord, who haſt cauſed all holy ſcrip-
" tures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in ſuch
" wiſe hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt them, that
" by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace,
" and ever hold faſt the bleſſed hope of everlaſting life, which thou
" haſt given us in our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt." Amen.

SUNDAY XXXVII.

The Duty of ſerving GOD.

JOSHUA, XXVI. 24.

AND THE PEOPLE SAID UNTO JOSHUA, THE LORD OUR GOD WILL WE SERVE, AND HIS VOICE WILL WE OBEY.

WHEN Joſhua had brought the Iſraelites into the land of Canaan, and put them into the quiet poſſeſſion of all the good things of this life wherewith it abounded, he made it his firſt and principal concern, being conſcious of their unaccountable propenſity to the worſhip of idols, to eſtabliſh and confirm them in the true religion, that is to ſay, in the ſervice of that ſupreme Being, who had by his almighty arm, ſtretched forth in their favour, brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the houſe of bondage, into a land which flowed, as we are told, with milk and honey.

And now, finding himſelf very infirm, and well ſtricken in years, and having too juſt reaſons for entertaining ſome jealous apprehenſions, that after his deceaſe they would fall off from their allegiance to the one true God, and ſerve the gods which their forefathers did on the other ſide the flood, and in Egypt; he like a tender and indulgent patriot, conſiders within himſelf, what meaſures were the moſt probable to meet with ſucceſs; what courſe he had beſt to take, in order to keep them ſtedfaſt and immoveable in thoſe principles, which he had from time to time impreſſed upon their minds,

and to which they had liſtened, at leaſt, to all outward appearance, with the utmoſt attention.

And in order to accompliſh this generous, this praiſe-worthy deſign, he convenes a general aſſembly, and therein repreſents to them, in a very well concerted and pathetic ſpeech, the miraculous manner, in which the Almighty had driven out the nations before them, though much greater and ſtronger than themſelves, and had ſettled them in the peaceable poſſeſſion of that land, which he had had promiſed them.

For which reaſon, he tells them, that in point of gratitude, were there no other motive to engage them, they ought to be upon their guard, to take heed to their ways, to love the Lord their God with all their hearts, and with all their minds, and with all their ſtrength, and to ſerve him, and him only.

Though this motive alone, one would imagine, ſhould prevail on them to look upon the falſe Gods of their neighbours with an eye of the utmoſt abhorrence and deteſtation; yet, as if he was ſtill jealous of their conduct, he ſummons the whole twelve tribes of Iſrael once more together; and in a full convocation, lays before them a ſuccinct account of the numberleſs bleſſings which the Almighty had thought fit to ſhower down upon them, and their fore-fathers, from the days of his faithful ſervant Abraham, whom he had ſelected from amongſt his idolatrous relations, down to the very time of their preſent ſolemn aſſembly.

From the ſerious conſideration, therefore, of the Almighty's paternal tenderneſs and regard for them, he implores them all in general, in the moſt affectionate terms, to keep firm and ſtedfaſt in the true religion, which they then profeſſed; that from thenceforth they would for ever abandon the thoughts of falſe gods, and ſerve the Lord only in ſincerity and truth.

Here, as an artful orator, he ſtops ſhort, and leaves them at laſt to their own free choice:—But ſays he, if it ſeems evil unto you to

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ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve, whether the gods whom your fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whoſe land ye dwell.

This, doubtleſs, was a maſter-piece of rhetorick, and a very comprehenſive, as well as artful inſinuation. He did not thereby intend to intimate, that mankind were at their own option to ſerve what god they pleaſed, but that no compulſion ought to be uſed in a concern of ſo great importance. If, ſays he, it ſeems evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve: —which is the ſame thing, in effect, as if he had ſaid.—" If after " all the undeniable teſtimonies which the Almighty has conde- " ſcended to give you of his peculiar preſence among you, and of " his being your rock of defence againſt your moſt powerful ene- " mies; if, after all the moſt ſolemn ties and obligations, which " he has thought fit thus to lay you under, by miraculouſly deliver- " ing you out of the hands of mercileſs tyrants and oppreſſors, you " can think fit, without the leaſt acknowledgment of ſuch ſignal fa- " vours, to abandon the worſhip and ſervice of the true God, and " inſtead thereof can ſlaviſhly ſubmit to fall proſtrate before ſenſe- " leſs ſtocks and ſtones, the work of men's hands,—then take your " choice; but I conceive a much better opinion of you; and am " perſuaded, that no one in this auguſt aſſembly, can entertain ſo " abject, ſo ungrateful a thought.—I am very well aſſured, that I " have offered the beſt religion in the world to your ſerious conſi- " deration, and I flatter myſelf, that you will all, with one heart, " and with one conſent adhere to it, without the leaſt diſtruſt or " diffidence."

Whereupon the whole congregation, to teſtify their univerſal applauſe and approbation of this important advice, thus ſolemnly given them by their religious lawgiver, cried out, with an audible voice, " God forbid, that we ſhould forſake the Lord to ſerve other " gods!"—and immediately afterwards made the ſolemn reſolution

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in the words of our text, The Lord our God will we ſerve, and his voice will we obey.

Having explained—with as much brevity as poſſible—the occaſion of this pious determination of the people of Iſrael; that which I would infer from it, is this general propoſition; namely, that a right, and a conſcientious ſervice of the true God, and a chearful obedience to his voice, is the ſureſt means, not only to promote our peace and happineſs in this world, but to ſecure our ſalvation in the world to come.—This was the ground of the Iſraelites ſolemn engagement to Joſhua, and the very ſame confidence may all thoſe raiſe to themſelves, who build their hopes on the ſame wiſe and ſolid foundation. Permit me then to recommend this reſolution of theirs to your imitation, and ſhew you the happy conſequences that will attend ſuch a daily and conſciencious diſcharge of your duty towards that God, in whom you live, move, and have your being.

In this promiſe, or ſolemn engagement, therefore, of ſerving the Lord, and obeying his voice, there are two things of the higheſt importance very plainly implied.

FIRST, a ſincere and unfeigned belief of, and a firm and ready aſſent to thoſe two great attributes of the only true and living God; namely, that he is an omnipreſent and omniſcient Being.

And SECONDLY, a practical application of ſuch aſſent or belief to the future conduct and regulation of our lives.

FIRST, a hearty belief of, and a firm aſſent to thoſe two great attributes of the only true and living God; namely, that he is an omnipreſent and omniſcient Being.

I ſhall not here endeavour to give you a detail of the various conjectures of ſome preſumptuous men, who have indulged their curioſities

rioſities too far, with reſpect to their reſearches into theſe two miſterious attributes of the divine eſſence, nor aim at reſolving the vain, and no ways edifying enquiries of others, who are wiſe above what is written, and are ever ſolicitous of knowing more of the Almighty than he has thought fit to diſcover of himſelf; but ſhall endeavour to give you ſuch ideas only of thoſe his divine perfections, as his holy Spirit has thought fit to reveal to us in the ſacred ſcriptures, which is the only light, that truly ſhines, or can direct us in ſuch dark and abſtruſe reſearches.

And, in the firſt place, let us liſten with attention to what God himſelf is pleaſed to ſay, in relation to his omnipreſence, by the mouth of his holy Prophets.—In Iſaiah, we find, that the Lord himſelf ſaith, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footſtool: and again, in Jeremiah, we have this remarkable interrogatory—Do not I fill heaven and earth, ſaith the Lord? Now the terms heaven and earth, in the language of the ſacred ſcriptures, frequently ſignify the ſpacious univerſe, and every part of it.—Thus Moſes in the introduction to his hiſtory of the creation, has theſe words—In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,—that is to ſay, the whole world,—and all beings, of what nature or kind ſoever, that are contained therein. And in the ſame ſenſe, our bleſſed Saviour himſelf makes uſe of the very ſame terms:—Till heaven and earth paſs away, one jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled;—that is to ſay, till the whole frame and fabric of the world ſhall be diſſolved. Again, we find, in the Pſalms of the Prophet David, the following elegant exclamation, Whither, O Lord, ſhall I go from thy Spirit, or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence? If I aſcend up into heaven, thou art there;—if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there;—if I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea, even there ſhall thy hand lead me; or, if I ſay, the darkneſs ſhall cover me, even the night ſhall be light about me.—Since then,

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there is no place ſo high, or deep, no place ſo dark or diſtant, but the Almighty is preſent in it; we learn thus much of this his particular attribute, that he fills every place, and yet is comprehended in none.—Will God, indeed, ſays Solomon, dwell on the earth? Behold! the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

Let us again ſearch the ſcriptures, in order to form the beſt idea we can of God's omniſcience.—And here we may conclude, that ſince all his perfections are infinite, his ways muſt of neceſſity be widely different from ours; that he does not know things after that weak and imperfect manner in which we trace them; but, that all things are naked and open, as the Apoſtle St. Paul expreſſes it,—to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

All events, and all occurrences, of what nature or kind ſoever, and in what place, how near or remote ſoever they may happen, or how publicly or privately ſoever they may be tranſacted, are equally known unto him. Am I a God at hand, ſaith the Lord, and not a God a-far off?

He not only knows what has been done in times paſt, and what is actually tranſacting at preſent, but is as familiarly converſant with every event that will come to paſs in future ages. We find the Almighty, in the book of Iſaiah, challenging the heathen gods upon this particular point.—Proſecute your cauſe, ſaith the Lord; bring forth your ſtrong reaſons.—Let them bring forth, and ſhew us what ſhall happen; ſhew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods. And St. James aſcribes to God this foreknowledge of future events.—Known to God, ſays he, are all his works from the beginning of the world.

He is not only acquainted with all future contingencies of the laſt and higheſt importance, ſuch as the change of governments, and the revolutions of ſtates: he ruleth, ſaith the prophet Daniel, in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomſoever he will; but his knowledge extends, even to the minuteſt, and moſt trivial occurrences

rences that can poſſibly be conceived; not a ſparrow falls to the ground without him, and the very hairs of our head are all numbered.

Again, not only all natural occurrences, but whatever proceeds from rational and free agents, is equally known unto him. Can any man hide himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee him, ſaith the Lord? The Lord looks from heaven, as the Pſalmiſt tells us, and beholds all the ſons of men,—he conſidereth all their works,—nay, he not only knows to perfection every word that we ſpeak, but the moſt ſecret ſentiments of our very ſouls; there is not a word in my tongue, ſays David, but thou, O Lord, knoweſt it altogether. Thou, Lord, underſtandeſt my thoughts afar off.

Though all this may ſtartle our weak reaſon; yet ſhe will inform us, that with regard to the divine attributes, it is a duty incumbent on us to ſtand aſtoniſhed at what the moſt intelligent, finite being can have no adequate idea of; and that, inſtead of prying with too much curioſity into ſuch dark and myſterious truths, it would much better become us to cry out with the Apoſtle St. Paul,—O the depth of the riches of the wiſdom and knowledge of God!—How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!—For who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been his counſellor?

From this ſcriptural account of theſe two great attributes of the deity, I mean, his omnipreſence and omniſcience, let us proceed to the practical application. If therefore, we will reſolve, with the Iſraelites, to ſerve the Lord, and obey his voice, we muſt not only believe, that in whatever place we are, we have him always before us, but demean ourſelves in ſuch a ſerious and devout manner, as becomes perſons who are conſcious of their being in his awful preſence; not only believe, that all our actions are open to his view, but uſe our utmoſt endeavours, that every thing we do, may meet with his approbation, and be acceptable in his ſight.

And, in order to induce us to the practice of our duty towards this all-ſeeing and omniſcient Being, I ſhall conſider him, FIRST, as a holy law-giver, who has laid down good and righteous rules for the regulation of our deportment.

SECONDLY, I ſhall conſider him as one, who obſerves our dutiful demeanour, and perfect obedience to his divine laws, with an exact and curious eye.

And THIRDLY, I ſhall conſider him, not only as a munificent benefactor of all thoſe who ſerve him in ſincerity and truth, and are obedient to his voice; but as a ſevere and awful avenger of all ſuch as preſume to act and live in the open violation of his divine laws, and inſtead of ſerving him, think of nothing but the gratification of their ſenſual appetites.

In the FIRST place, then, I am to conſider this omnipreſent and omniſcient God as a holy law-giver, who has laid down ſufficient directions for our future conduct and deportment.

And in this light he is repreſented to us in the ſacred ſcriptures.—The Lord, ſays the Prophet Iſaiah, is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver:—and St. James aſſures us, that there is one law-giver, that is able to ſave and to deſtroy.—Now, this great law-giver has preſcribed rules for the regulation of our conduct and demeanour two ſeveral ways.—Firſt, by implanting in our hearts, when he firſt created us, a general idea of good and evil, whereby we might purſue the one, and avoid the other:—and this falls under the denomination of the law of nature, to which St. Paul refers, in his Epiſtle to the Romans, where he tells them,—when the Gentiles, who have not the law, that is to ſay, have no ſacred ſcriptures,—no revelation of the divine will to guide or direct them, do yet by nature the things contained in the law, theſe, having not the law, are a

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law to themſelves, which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts:—and this law is ſufficient to convince thoſe who indulge themſelves in the violation of it, that they are guilty of a very flagrant offence, their conſciences alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts either accuſing or excuſing one another. Secondly, by the inſpiration of proper perſons, with the knowledge of his divine will, and ſending them forth into all nations to make a due diſcovery of it to all mankind; and what is thus communicated to them by perſons ſo duly qualified, is termed in a peculiar manner, his revealed law.—And this ſuperior law we have comprized in the books of the Old and New Teſtament, though ſomewhat more particularly in the New, wherein we have the moſt abſolute and compleat revelation of his divine will, which he has made by his dearly beloved and only begotten ſon, our bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who has perfected the moral law, and brought life and immortality to light; who has condeſcended ſo far as to give us a fuller and more clear explication of it, has extended its directive power much further, and enforced its obligations with greater ſtrength. It muſt be acknowledged, that this is a perfect law indeed, which extends not only to our words and actions, but to the very ſecret receſſes of our ſouls, exacting from us all an unaffected ſincerity and purity of heart, and propoſing to us, on the one hand, the moſt glorious rewards, to engage and induce us to a ready obedience to the divine will; and on the other, the ſevereſt puniſhments that can poſſibly be conceived, to deter us from preſumptuous tranſgreſſions.

Being fully convinced that our indulgent Creator has condeſcended in various ways and manners to give mankind good and righteous rules for the regulation of their conduct through life, we ſhall be prepared to view this great God of the Iſraelites, and our God, as a ſtrict and diligent obſerver of the minuteſt of our actions,

but more particularly of our dutiful deportment towards him, with regard to his moſt ſacred laws.

The holy Spirit frequently vouchſafes, in condeſcenſion to our infirmities, to intimate to us, that the Almighty not only overlooks all our actions, how ſecret ſoever, and obſerves, with the utmoſt ſtrictneſs, our deportment towards him, with reſpect to our obedience and ſubmiſſion to his divine will;—but records them, with their particular circumſtances, in the book of his remembrance.—The Prophet Malachi aſſures us, that as to the good works, and virtuous behaviour of the righteous, they that feared the Lord ſpake often one to another; that is to ſay, frequently aſſembled together, and entertained each other with ſuch ſerious diſcourſe, as tended to the everlaſting ſalvation of their precious and immortal ſouls; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.—And as the Almighty is thus exact in ſetting down the virtuous actions of all good men, that they may hereafter reap the benefit and advantage of their truth and fidelity;—ſo will he be no leſs curious and exact in recording the tranſgreſſions of the wicked, in order to their everlaſting condemnation.

We come now, in the laſt place, to conſider this God of the Iſraelites, and our God, as a munificent benefactor to all thoſe who reſolve to ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth, and to make it the buſineſs of their lives to obey his voice; and as a tremendous and ſevere judge, to condemn and puniſh all thoſe who demean themſelves like ſtubborn and undutiful children, and act without remorſe, in open violation of his divine laws: for it is in order that he may deal with us impartially, and conſiſtent with his divine mercy and vengeance, that he watches with ſo ſtrict an eye, and enters down into his book in ſo exact a manner, and in ſuch indelible characters, not only every action, but every thought of man's heart, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. I, the Lord, ſays the Prophet Jeremiah, ſearch

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the heart;—I try the reins.—And what is the gracious purpoſe and deſign of all this enquiry? Why, even to give to every man according to the fruit of his doings.—And St. Paul aſſured the Romans, that he will obſerve the very ſame method at the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, when he will render to every man according to his deeds; to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not buy the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil; but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good.

When we have thus duly conſidered the Almighty, as a holy lawgiver, as an omnipreſent and all-wiſe Being, and as a juſt and impartial judge; and one that is incapable of erring; we muſt conſider him, with reſpect to all other occurrences, as the ſole governor and director of them all. We muſt firmly believe, and conclude, without the leaſt diffidence or heſitation, that every event, how important or trivial ſoever, is the reſult of his wiſe councel, and not the effects of blind chance, or unintelligent neceſſity; that every accident of life, which befals either ourſelves, or any of the inferior part of his creation, is what he hath ordained, and thought moſt proper and convenient to permit, and it is a duty for ever incumbent on us, to imagine, that though his ways are not like our ways, and ſeem to us very dark and intricate; yet, in reality, that he orders and diſpoſes all things for the beſt, with the greateſt views, and to the wiſeſt ends and purpoſes, namely, his own glory, and the eternal benefit and advantage of all thoſe, who, with the houſe of Iſrael, join in a firm and unſhaken reſolution to ſerve the Lord their God with all their ſtrength, with all their might, and with all their ſoul;—and to obey his voice, and to ſerve no other Gods but him, according to his own commandment.

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Having thus endeavoured to demonſtrate to you, in as plain a manner as poſſible, what an exalted idea we ought to entertain of the only true God, and of him, with whom only we have to do, and on whom, not only our temporal, but eternal happineſs entirely depends; we ſhall cloſe this diſcourſe with ſome ſhort directions, with reſpect to the manner of our future deportment towards him, that our ſervices may prove acceptable in his ſight, and that, at the great and ſolemn day, when his Son ſhall come in righteouſneſs to judge the whole world, we may be ranked amongſt that happy number, to whom he ſhall give that comfortable invitation mentioned in the goſpel; Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Though it cannot be ſuppoſed, neither is it indeed required, that every moment of our lives ſhould be employed in one uninterrupted contemplation on the divine attributes, and in the actual application of our belief of them to every action of no moment or importance; yet in order to our ſerving the Lord in ſincerity and truth, and being obedient to his voice, we muſt, in the firſt place, live under ſuch an habitual ſenſe of the Almighty infinite perfections, as may have a ſufficient effect on our conduct in general, and induce us to have a watchful eye over ſuch of our actions as are of greater moment; as are either of a heinous and ſinful nature, or ſuch as are matters of duty highly neceſſary and incumbent on us, as creatures entirely dependent on that ſupreme Being, to whom we owe our exiſtence. But for as much as confirmed habits are never to be procured or kept up, but by frequent repetition of the ſame thing, it will be highly requiſite, in order to our obtaining and preſerving in our minds an habitual ſenſe of God's infinite perfections, that ſome certain and ſtated times ſhould be appointed, and ſet apart for ſerious and devout contemplations.

And ſurely there is no one, how requiſite ſoever his daily labour may be for the ſupport of himſelf and his family, but will chearfully devote

one hour, at leaſt, in the return of four and twenty, for this religious purpoſe. But what excuſe can poſſibly be made for thoſe, to whom the Almighty has been profuſe of his divine favours, and bleſt them, not only with the neceſſaries, but all the comforts and conveniencies of this life; and has planted them in ſo happy a ſituation, that they have not the leaſt room to take a thought for what they ſhall eat, or what they ſhall drink, or wherewithal they ſhall be cloathed?—Can perſons ſo indulged by the gracious providence of the ſupreme Ruler of the univerſe, have the leaſt ſhadow of a pretence to decline ſuch a religious engagement?—And yet were this poor pittance, this ſmall portion of time but rightly employed, and laid out to the beſt advantage by every one, I dare venture to affirm, that the world would be much better than it is, and that profaneneſs and immorality would not run through our ſtreets, as it does at preſent, like an impetuous torrent.

That ſmall portion, therefore, of the day, which ſhould be appropriated and ſet apart for lifting up our eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help, ſhould doubtleſs be the morning, when firſt we awake. It is highly requiſite, that when the Almighty, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, has been about our beds all night, he ſhould be the firſt object of our waking thoughts; and that we ſhould converſe with him before any of our friends have admittance to us, or before we engage in, or enter upon any ſecular or temporal affairs. Such a practice as this, would moſt aſſuredly have a happy influence over our deportment through the whole day:—Such a practice as this would be the moſt probable method for begetting and maintaining in us an habitual ſenſe of the divine bleſſings, from time to time conferred upon us.—But, as we ought thus every day to devote ſome ſmall portion of our time to the ſervice of the great author of our being; ſo ought we more eſpecially to make our applications to him on all extraordinary occaſions, that is to ſay, in time of divine worſhip, and in all ſignal occurrences, whether very fortunate, or in a more than common manner unſucceſsful.

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And firſt, in divine worſhip, either public or private; if in the latter, we ought to conſider, that although our cloſets be locked, yet our Father which is in heaven, however retired we may be, ſees all that we do in ſecret; that he lends an ear to our mental devotions, that every motion of our hearts are open to his view;—if in the former, we are then to conſider, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he will be in the midſt of them: that he knows perfectly well our moſt ſecret intentions, with what particular deſigns, and out of what principles and motives we approach his ſacred temple; whether out of obedience and ſubmiſſion to his divine will, and with a modeſt hope of a bleſſing on our pious endeavours to pleaſe him, and render ourſelves acceptable in his ſight; or whether out of any ſecular views, and the vain expectation of ſome temporal advantage, that he ſees through our diſguiſe, and very well knows whether the motions of our hearts accompany thoſe of our lips; whether we liſten to the bleſſed doctrines of the goſpel, with an intent to imbibe and practiſe them in our lives and converſations; or whether we attend the church out of formality only, in order to gratify ſome curioſity, or ſpend our time in making trivial obſervations on the diſſipated part of the aſſembly, whilſt the miniſters of the Lord, are reading or expounding to us the ſacred ſcriptures; whether we approach his altar with due reverence, and a tender regard for our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who died for our ſins, and inſtituted the bleſſed ſacrament in commemoration of his body that was given, and his blood that was ſhed for the remiſſion of our tranſgreſſions; or elſe, out of ſome ſelf-intereſted, ſiniſter deſigns, and worldly conſiderations, thereby proſtituting the ordinance of God to the ſervice of Satan.

Again, we ought, in a particular manner, to make our humble addreſſes to the throne of grace, when we meet with any remarkable events which influence and affect our minds with any greater degree than ordinary, either of tranſport or confuſion.—In adverſity,

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we ought to conſider, that afflictions ariſe not out of the duſt, but are ſent down upon us by the ſpecial appointment, or by the wiſe permiſſion of that ſupreme Being, who ſees our unhappy ſituation, and knows perfectly well what ſtate and condition is, in reality, beſt for us, who can wipe away all tears from our eyes, whenever he thinks moſt convenient, can ſuſtain us under the violence of any temptation or trial, how ſevere ſoever, and can direct the iſſue of them to our everlaſting benefit and advantage.—In proſperity, we are to turn our eyes upwards, to look above ſecond cauſes, and acknowledge our ſucceſs dependent on God alone; to reflect, that he has been pleaſed to ſhower down his bleſſings on us beyond our deſerts, that he ſees what uſe we make of his acts of indulgence towards us, and, in ſhort, whether we employ them to the honour and glory of the donor, or ſquander them away in the ſervice of mammon, and his adherents.

And thus, by ſpending our days in ſuch an habitual ſenſe of God's infinite perfections, as may influence and affect our future deportment, eſpecially our actions of moment; we may truly imitate the laudable example of the houſe of Iſrael in our text, and firmly reſolve to ſerve the Lord our God, as they did,—to obey his voice,—and to look down with an eye of contempt and deteſtation on the ſervice of all other Gods.

From what has been ſaid, you muſt of neceſſity infer the happy influence, and effect, ſuch an habitual practice as this would have upon you, not only in the particular caſes beforementioned, but in that ſtate and condition of life which providence allots you, whether eaſy or grievous.

What temptations, on the one hand, how advantageous ſoever, can prevail with any one to be guilty of a known ſin, who conſiders himſelf in the preſence of an all-ſeeing and an avenging God, who has not only commanded him to deſiſt from ſuch evil practices, but will moſt aſſuredly, without a ſincere contrition and ſorrow for

them, eternally puniſh him for the commiſſion of them? In vain does the ſinner wait for darkneſs to cover him; ſince whatever he does at midnight, and in his cloſet, is as open and naked to the eye of the Almighty, as if it had been done at noon-day, or upon the houſe-top.

And, on the other hand, what hardſhips and troubles, what dangers and difficulties, can terrify, or diſſuade that perſon from the ſtrict ſervice of God, who lives under an habitual ſenſe of his all-ſearching eye?—Though we muſt expect to meet with croſſes and diſappointments, in our chriſtian warfare; yet we muſt wreſtle and fight boldly, not only againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities and powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, and againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places.—But let the corruptions of our own depraved natures be ever ſo ſtrong; let the enemies of the righteous, be ever ſo numerous; yet they can never want encouragement or reſolution to oppoſe them, when they know that the living God eſpouſes their cauſe, and will, in ſpite of all oppoſition, enable them at laſt to come off triumphant.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY XXXVIII.

The Sin and Folly of prophane Swearing.

PROVERBS, XVIII. 21.

DEATH AND LIFE ARE IN THE POWER OF THE TONGUE.

BEHOLD how great a matter a little fire kindleth! The tongue is a fire; a world of iniquity; a world indeed, if ſuch its power. How dangerous a weapon then is this little member! And how nice and critical, as well as important an affair muſt be the conduct and regulation of it! If the iſſues of life and death are from thence, we ought to look well to it, to ſee that the current be reſtrained to its proper channel; that nothing flow from thence, but what may tend to the faireſt iſſue, and end in life, immortality, and happineſs.

But is it poſſible, that ſo much can depend upon the tongue? Are words ſo pregnant with happineſs or miſery? Words, which are but a breath of tranſient air? True, yet by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.

But let us come to a cloſer examination of the matter. Let us enquire how this mighty power came to be lodged in this little inſtrument, the tongue, and in what ſenſe, and how far it is evidently reſident in it. Let us ſee what are the uſual offices and employments of the tongue. The avowed office of this uſeful and ſignificant member of the human frame is, to expreſs the conceptions of the brain, and its employment takes in the whole extent of lan-

guage; comprehending at once praiſe and obloquy, worſhip and execration, mirth and ſorrow, harmony and diſcord. Therewith bleſs we God, even the father of all things, and therewith curſe we men, who are made after the ſimilitude of that God. Therewith may we on the one hand, make confeſſion unto ſalvation, and on the other, defile our whole body, and inflame, or ſet on fire, the whole courſe of nature. And in all this, it is ſuppoſed to act under the influence of the heart; and in the worſt caſes, I believe, it generally does. External expreſſions of virtuous and pious ſentiments cannot be always depended on for their truth and ſincerity. Men may think it neceſſary to make an appearance of good qualities, of which they are not, in reality, poſſeſſed. But the care muſt be widely different on the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion. There is no end to be ſerved in a man's appearing worſe than he is, and the rancour of the heart will ever be conſidered as the probable ſource and fountain of the malediction of the tongue. Thus are death and life—as ſays Solomon—in the power of the tongue; for, on the very ſame principle, that men ſhall give account of, and conſequently receive the equitable puniſhment for every idle word they ſhall ſpeak; they ſhall alſo, receive the applauſe and reward that is due to a juſt and proper regulation of ſpeech; and by their words be juſtified as well as condemned.

With what apparent view, for what evident purpoſe, was this inſtrument of ſpeech made a part of the human fabric? Why phyſically ſpeaking, to enable man to expreſs his wants, to acquaint his fellow-animals with the otherwiſe illegible characters of his heart; and, in a word, to render him a converſible and ſociable creature. But with reſpect to moral and religious ends, there were much higher and more noble views. Let the ſon of Sirach inſtruct us in them; the Lord hath given me a tongue, and I will praiſe him therewith. The firſt principal view of the creation of man, of his being endowed with ſuch high and noble faculties, ſuch peculiar excel-

excellencies, was, doubtleſs, the glory of the ſupreme Creator. Man is the offspring of ineffable goodneſs. Every faculty he enjoys is the donation of unbounded benevolence. Will not this ſuggeſt to him, that the proper and natural employment of thoſe faculties is to give glory, and honour, and thankſgiving to that being from whom they are derived?

What then are we to ſay to ſuch perſons as pervert thoſe very powers which were given them for the beſt and nobleſt, to the worſt and vileſt of purpoſes; who employ that tongue to blaſpheme and diſhonour that Being whom it was given them to praiſe; to confuſe, and deſtroy that ſociety which they were formed on purpoſe to ſupport and adorn? Is not this putting the moſt glaring affront on the author of our being? Is not this perverting the courſe and order of nature in the moſt groſs and palpable manner? Is not this, in ſhort, oppoſing and thwarting the expreſs views of providence, and deſtroying the apparent end and deſign of our creation? What ſhall be done unto thee, O thou falſe tongue? Falſe in the trueſt, and moſt extenſive latitude; falſe to all views, ſocial, moral, or religious; and falſe to thy friend, thy father, and thy benefactor. What ſhall be done unto thee?--Even mighty, and ſharp arrows, and hot burning coals, ſhall be the fatal but juſt reward of thy perjury.

Who are they that have done this great wickedneſs? Is this to be aſked, when our ſtreets are filled with curſing and blaſphemy; when execrations and oaths intrude themſelves into every article of diſcourſe; when they become the moſt conſiderable part of every general converſation; when even our infants and women become remarkable; remarkable, by the worſt brand of infamy, for a ſhocking proficiency in the language and diſcourſe of devils?

I know not whether thoſe who are addicted to this pernicious vice in any degree are at all to be argued with upon the principle of reaſon and religion. Surely not the latter. The rule by which

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any practice ſtands ſo ſolemnly condemned muſt certainly be diſallowed before the practice can become ſo general. And if that be the caſe, then farewel reaſon too. The connnexion is ſo cloſe between thoſe inſeparable friends, that human, nay, I ſcruple not to add divine power is too weak to diſengage them.

But as it is to be hoped, there are but few ſuch; and that the practice of that pernicious vice of common ſwearing and curſing is more generally owing to the want of duly conſidering, or perhaps of rightly underſtanding the heinous nature and fatal conſequences of it; I ſhall, therefore, proceed to lay before you a few of the moſt obvious, and moſt concluſive arguments, which may be urged againſt it, from the reſpective conſiderations both of reaſon and religion.

With reſpect to the latter, certain it is, that nothing can be more forcibly prohibited, more formally condemned, or more ſolemnly denounced againſt, through the whole ſyſtem at leaſt of the Chriſtian law. The author of it has expreſsly forbid us to ſwear at all by any kind of object either in heaven or on earth; not even by our own heads; how much leſs then by the great and venerable name of that tremendous Being, who firſt formed, and who upholds all things! If the inanimate heavens are not to be called upon thus vainly, becauſe they are his throne; if to the very ſenſeleſs earth we owe this ſolemn reverence, becauſe it is his footſtool; how dreadful a profanation muſt it be, to invoke the ſacred name of the great King himſelf, from whom alone both throne and footſtool receive their ſanctity! So great ſtreſs is laid upon it by the Apoſtle, that he commands it to be avoided even above all things. Above all things, my brethren, ſwear not. And of ſo much importance is the government of the tongue, conſidered by him in another place, that he ſcruples not to pronounce it entirely deſtructive to all religion, and abſolutely incompatible with the eſſential qualifications of a true and ſincere Chriſtian. If any man among you

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ſeemeth to be religious, that is, profeſſes a belief of the doctrines, and a regard to the rules of the goſpel; yet, if that man bridle not his tongue, but be licentious and extravagant in his ſpeech, launching out into oaths, execrations, and blaſphemies; depend upon it, thoſe profeſſions are inſincere. What little appearances he makes of religion are vain, and what hopes and expectations he may form from it, vain, abſurd, groundleſs, deluſive, and deceitful. As for curſes, how ill do they become the mouth of him who profeſſes himſelf a diſciple of the meek and benevolent Jeſus, whoſe doctrine and whoſe life breathe nothing but love and bleſſing! Whoſe example forbids us, being reviled, to revile again; being inſulted, to threaten; and whoſe repeated precepts poſitively enjoin bleſſings, even in return for curſes received; and prayers, for ſpiteful and injurious treatment. Even under the law, it had been long ſince expreſsly forbidden to take the name of the Lord in vain, and a ſevere vengeance was denounced againſt ſuch as ſhould be hardy enough to violate the precept. Hoſea ranks the ſwearer with the atheiſt, the thief, the murderer, and the adulterer. Uſe not thy mouth to intemperate ſwearing—ſays the ſon of Syrach—for therein is the word of ſin. And again, the talk of him who ſweareth much maketh one's hair to ſtand an end; and the brawls of ſuch make men ſtop their ears. But it were needleſs to multiply proofs, that the practice of common and prophane ſwearing and curſing is wholly indefenſible on the ſide of religion. If there be force in words, nothing is more expreſsly or more ſolemly prohibited. And what can be expected from the open violation of thoſe repeated prohibitions, but the puniſhment annexed to ſuch offence; the vengeance particularly denounced againſt ſuch glaring and palpable affronts upon the ſupreme governor and legiſlator? The Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain. And in what degree of guilt he ſhall be held, let the holy Pſalmiſt in ſome meaſure inſtruct us. " As he loved curſing, ſo ſhall it come unto him.

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" As he delighted not in bleſſing, ſo ſhall it be far from him. As " he cloathed himſelf with curſing, like as with a garment, ſo ſhall " it come to his bowels as water, and like oil into his bones. It " ſhall be unto him like the garment which covereth him, and for " a girdle wherewith he is girded continually." Thus we ſee the imprecations of the curſer, whether they be levelled at himſelf or not—as they frequently indeed are—will ſtill retort upon himſelf in their fulleſt influence. " His miſchief ſhall return upon his own " head, and his violent dealing ſhall come down upon his own " pate."

Hear how aptly this is confirmed by the ſon of Sirach. " A " man who uſeth much ſwearing, ſaith he, ſhall be filled with ini- " quity, and the plague ſhall never depart from his houſe. If he " ſhall offend, his ſin ſhall be upon him, and if he acknowledge not " his ſin, he maketh a double offence, and if he ſwear in vain, he " ſhall not be innocent, but his houſe ſhall be full of calamities. " This is the word which is cloathed about with death."

Were we even deſtitute of theſe frequent, expreſs, and ſolemn cautions againſt prophaning the ſacred name of God, ſurely reaſon muſt inform us, that we cannot be guilty of a more audacious affront to the ſupreme Being, than to invoke him on every the moſt trivial and impertinent occaſion, or to ſport with the great and awful character of him who gave being to all worlds. And how immenſely does it exaggerate this guilt, if that ſacred authority be appealed, that inviolable name be proſtituted to the atteſtation of the moſt impudent and daring falſehoods? And that this is too generally the caſe with common ſwearers need not, I think, be obſerved to you; nor will they themſelves if they have the leaſt ſenſe of ſhame or modeſty remaining in them, dare to deny it.

This vice of common ſwearing then is, in the firſt place, by an apparent violation of his expreſs commands, moſt provoking to the ſupreme Being. But do we provoke God? What motive have we for

for it? Hath he ever injured us? On the contrary, are we not the creatures of his bounty? Do we not depend upon him for life, and all things which pertain unto it? Doth he not diſpenſe unto us the various bleſſings of nature and fortune with a moſt bountiful hand? What encouragement have we to it? Are we ſtronger than he? Can we over-rule his juſt reſentments? Can we ward off the ſtroke of vengeance?—The ſwearer then in this reſpect ſtands doubly convicted of folly and ingratitude. Of ingratitude to his beſt and conſtant benefactor; of folly, in regard to himſelf, by expoſing himſelf to ills which he knows not how either to avoid, or to endure.

But ſecondly, it is injurious to men, not only to thoſe individuals who are the particular objects of his curſes and execrations, but even to ſociety in general; becauſe of ſwearing, the land mourneth, ſaith the Prophet. The ſin is of ſo deep a dye, as to occaſion national viſitations, by ſword, by famine, or peſtilence. He, therefore, whoſe crimes are ſo flagrant as to bring on public vengeance, is a bane and peſt to ſociety, a public enemy, a traytor to his country, and ought to be treated as ſuch. After this conſideration, it is needleſs to mention the comparatively trivial guilt of indecency. When a man has done his endeavour to deſtroy the peace of his country, it is nothing to ſay, that he wounds the ear of every rational and religious Chriſtian, that he deſtroys the peace of every good man, and puts the groſſeſt affront upon his underſtanding, by entertaining him with the language and converſation of infernal ſpirits.

Suppoſe we were to aſk the ſwearer, what poſſible pleas can you urge in ſupport of this ſhocking and abominable practice? I am afraid we muſt not expect from him any rational or ſatisfactory anſwer. For will he pretend views of profit and worldly advantage? Who ever heard of wealth, honour, or reputation thus acquired? It is true, in caſes of direct perjury, ſomething of this kind may be often the conſequence; but the common ſwearer has nothing to

do with this. And few, I believe, will pretend to ſay, that they have ever made a friend, procured a legacy, inheritance, place, penſion, or donation, becauſe they were remarkable proficients in blaſphemy. On the contrary, this argument lies ſtrong againſt him in more reſpects than one; for it is not only repugnant to the laws of God, but provided by the laws of the ſtate, that all offences of this nature ſhall be puniſhed with a pecuniary penalty. And I hope a man will not ſay he gets any thing by that, but poverty as well as infamy. It is natural, however, for all ſober-minded men, —and ſuch one would willingly hope, will always compoſe the majority—to avoid commerce and dealings with a man of that character, on that very account. The neceſſary conſequence of which muſt be, that the advantages ariſing from his particular trade or calling muſt be proportionably leſſened. Thus much for profit.—For honour, the portion which comes to his ſhare is to be ranked in the moſt abject and loweſt claſs, among the very dregs and outcaſt of the people.

Is fame and reputation his view? Here perhaps he may ſucceed better; but yet he muſt wait awhile for his harveſt, till he be received into that ſociety, where alone he can find fit companions for him, and where it may be conſidered as ſome kind of excellency perhaps, ſuch a one as it is, to come neareſt the grand pattern of blaſphemy and impiety. Perhaps the ſwearer may imagine, that oaths give grace and ſpirit to his diſcourſe, and to himſelf the character of courage and vivacity. Who are to be his judges? The ſenſible part of mankind, who have the beſt right to that office, he muſt not appeal to, the abandoned themſelves dare not publicly ſide with him, were they ever ſo much inclinable by opinion, which I am verily perſuaded they are not. The only critics like to favour him on this occaſion, ſeem to be the inhabitants of a certain region, where blaſphemy is probably the reigning wit. But let him enjoy the applauſe of devils unenvied; few will grudge him his admirers, who

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conſider, that every peal of laughter thus raiſed will coſt him a groan in hell, and the mirth which is to ſucceed it, ſhall conſiſt in weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth.

I will not ſuppoſe, that there can be a wretch abandoned enough to aſſert a pleaſure, a ſelf-ſatisfaction, in common ſwearing, in blaſpheming the ſacred name of the great God, in violating poſitive ordinances, as well human as divine. Sure devils themſelves cannot derive agreeable ſenſations from ſo ſhocking a practice. In ſhort, in every light it can be viewed; on all poſſible conſiderations, common ſwearing is the moſt irrational, the moſt indefenſible vice, with the leaſt to ſay for itſelf of any in the whole catalogue of human frailties, for it expoſes a man to the hearty contempt and abhorrence of every honeſt Chriſtian, to the preſent loſs of his property by the penal ſtatutes, if the ſober part of mankind can but be perſuaded to have ſpirit enough to put them in force; and to the certain loſs of all that is truly valuable, eternal happineſs hereafter, from the juſt reſentments of an injured God, without the leaſt trifle in the world in exchange for them, without the poſſibility of attaining one ſingle grain of either pleaſure, honour, profit, or any other uſeful acquiſition by the bargain.

It has not even the common pleas of other vices to be urged in its behalf. There are ſeveral crimes which a man may with ſome little appearance of reaſon at leaſt charge upon nature; but here, every thing of that kind is out of the queſtion, and neither conſtitution nor appetite will ſtand him in any ſtead. For ſure a man will not think of ſaying, that he has a conſtitutional propenſity to blaſpheme, as the prodigal, the miſer, the wanton, &c. may urge for their reſpective failings, or an appetite to ſwear, as the glutton avows to the delight of the throat and palate; perhaps every ſyllable he can poſſibly urge in his excuſe—for defence I will not call it—may be reduced to theſe three pleas; paſſion, habit, and inadvertency; but I would not have him build much upon either of them. For,

in the firſt place, whatever is in itſelf abſolutely evil and unwarrantable can never ſanctify or excuſe what reſults from it. A man ſwears becauſe he is in a paſſion. But why is he in a paſſion? Does he not know, that intemperate anger is itſelf almoſt one of the greateſt faults a man can be guilty of? Does he not know, that it ſtands expreſsly forbidden by the letter of the ſcripture, which tells him he muſt be ſlow to wrath, that furious anger was not made for him who is born of a woman?—That he ſhould be angry and ſin not. Does he not know, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God? Will a man then ſwear becauſe he is in a paſſion, when he is abſolutely forbid ever to be in a paſſion? And one great reaſon of that prohibition is on this very account; leſt he ſhould be tempted to blaſpheme, and to take the name of his God in vain. If a man ſays, he ſwears by dint of habit, this is making the caſe ten times worſe; for an habitual cuſtom of ſinning is ſurely in a greater degree of guilt than an occaſional lapſe. But how did he acquire that habit? Was it not by an apparent failure in his duty both to God and man? But be this habit ever ſo ſtrong, he muſt ſhake it off; reaſon as well as religion requires it; nay, his own ſafety demands it of him; unleſs he has a mind to experience the truth of another neceſſary deduction, and to run without farther thought into eternal damnation, becauſe he has got a habit of deſerving it.

Even inadvertency will not ſerve his turn: when a man thinks it a ſufficient excuſe for his ſervant having neglected his buſineſs, that he tells him it was owing to his not once troubling his head about his directions, then may he alſo himſelf be allowed to urge the plea of inadvertency for ſwearing, and taking God's name in vain, in open contempt of the moſt ſolemn, moſt expreſs, and frequent commands to the contrary.

You ſee then how the affair ſtands, without the leaſt counter-balance of profit or pleaſure either preſent or future; the certain

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gain may be reſolved into contempt, ignominy, and perhaps poverty here, chains and darkneſs, vengeance and eternal miſery hereafter. It is not too late for the moſt deſperate to retrieve himſelf; but for him who is a blaſphemer of yeſterday, to perſiſt in it but one moment longer may be attended with the moſt fatal and deplorable conſequences.

Let me adjure, therefore all ſuch as are conſcious of any guilt in this reſpect, by all that they themſelves hold dear, to give theſe obſervations their due force; not to look on my affectionate remonſtrances on this head as a matter of courſe only, but the effect of a real and ſincere concern for their preſent and future well-being.

And though I would, if poſſible, hope, that we ſhall meet with but few occaſions to employ it; yet I muſt not omit to deſire the hearty concurrence of all ſober-minded perſons in endeavouring to ſuppreſs this horrid and pernicious vice, by applying another more effectual kind of arguments to ſuch perverſe, obſtinate, and wicked wretches as ſhall be deaf to theſe. You ſee what power the legiſlature has put into our hands; let every one of us reſolve to uſe it to the utmoſt on every occaſion which may offer for the glory of God, and the good of our fellow-creatures. Oh, that there were indeed ſuch a ſpirit in us all, though we were to ſlay every one his man, who ſhould join to Baal-peor, that the iniquity might be done away from among the congregation! For on thoſe terms only will the Lord return unto his wonted diſplays of mercy and indulgence, and the plague be ſtayed from Iſrael.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY XXXIX.

The Danger of prophane Swearing.

EXODUS, XX. 7.

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN: FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN.

I Have been induced to enter upon this topic from a thorough perſuaſion that prophane ſwearing is the inlet to every other vice. When men have once ſet aſide a due and awful veneration for the ſupreme Being, they are prepared for all manner of wickedneſs, and any temptation, how weak ſoever, is ſtrong enough to draw them into the ſervice of the great enemy of mankind.

It is with pleaſure I can premiſe, that ſwearing in any polite company is now looked upon as ſuch a breach of good manners, that the man who dares to be guilty of ſuch indecency is ſure to be deſpiſed. As the lower ſort of the people are very apt to take pattern by their ſuperiors in their vices; I wiſh we could perſuade them to copy their virtues too, eſpecially in the article before us; for we muſt deſpair of ever ſeeing the leaſt ſigns of a reformation, whilſt this vice is ſo infectious and ſo univerſal. The dangers into which our growing ſins and iniquities may involve us, is an argument of too nice a nature to affect ſuch as are moſt addicted to this vice of ſwearing; becauſe, they know by obſervation and experience that vengeance does not always overtake the ſinner in the commiſſion of his crime.

crime. I ſhall wave, therefore, all conſiderations of that kind, and ſeek out for ſuch as may make, if poſſible, ſome impreſſions on the minds of this abandoned crew, But alas! how few of theſe diſſolute wretches are there that attend the church at all, and for that reaſon are within the reach of our reproof! So, that at laſt we muſt leave them to be puniſhed in ſuch a manner as the law directs, and I doubt not, were a few of the moſt notorious but to be taken proper notice of by the magiſtrates, it would have a good effect upon the reſt; and I muſt take the liberty to ſay, that it is time for the magiſtrates to exert themſelves in this matter, ſince there are ſome grown ſo hardened in their impudence and wickedneſs, as to ſwear not only in the hearing, but in the very face of thoſe who have a proper power to puniſh them. What connivance ſoever may be given by others to a crime of ſo pernicious a nature as we are treating of, it is, doubtleſs, a duty incumbent on the clergy to level their diſcourſes at ſuch offences as are found to be the bane of ſociety, and the deſtruction of our moſt holy religion, that no one unhappy member may be loſt, for want of their endeavours. What regards the lower rank of people, is doubtleſs a proper ſubject for the pulpit; they have immortal ſouls as well as their ſuperiors, and ſtand in need of all the helps that can be given to preſerve them from falling into the ſnares of ſin and Satan; for ſome of thoſe few who attend public worſhip, have no other opportunities of information, than what they receive in our churches. As for thoſe who have had the happineſs of a liberal education, though our diſcourſes may ſometimes ſeem levelled at them, yet it is only to remind them of thoſe duties which they cannot but know as well as ourſelves, and by our expoſing vice and immorality in ſo public a manner, to make them bluſh at the commiſſion of it.—But to return to our ſubject. What can our preaching avail, or our telling men the dangers they run of eternal damnation, when upon every trivial occaſion, nay, upon no occaſion at all, they will impiouſly

piouſly call on the Almighty to damn and deſtroy them. There is no one ſure who has the leaſt fear of God before his eyes, but muſt be ſtruck with horror and amazement, and be cut to the heart at hearing ſuch repeated prophanations! One would imagine that theſe impious wretches ſhould tremble at the thoughts of death, ſince they can expect nothing but the wrath of an offended God for their portion. It is what they have called upon him to inflict upon them ten thouſand times over, and he who cannot lie has aſſured them, that their wicked wiſhes ſhall be fulfilled; for, he will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain.

All mankind have infinite obligations to Almighty God; and every moment we live is a freſh monument of his mercy. Whenever he withdraws his protection from us, we fall into numberleſs evils, and death itſelf. Since then, it is by his permiſſion and goodneſs alone that we live, move, and have our being, what can be more impious than to employ almoſt every moment of that time in oaths and curſes, which ought to be ſpent in praiſes and thankſgivings? We profeſs to believe, that God knows the ſecrets of our hearts, that nothing is hid from his all-ſearching eye, that he has power to puniſh us with eternal torments, that the end of diſobedience is certain death, and that he can deſtroy, if he pleaſes, the whole world in one moment; that we daily deſerve his wrath by caſual ſins, that he could ſink us inſtantaneouſly to the loweſt pit of deſtruction, and that ſhould we die without a hearty and ſincere repentance, we ſhall ſuffer unutterable torments to all eternity. O tremendous thought; to be eternally in pain, to ſpend millions and millions of years in unquenchable fire, and to have no hope of redemption, to have a proſpect of heaven, and yet to find it ſhut for ever againſt us! What heart can bear ſo much as to think of eternal miſery? And yet, how many are there, who, though they profeſs to believe theſe certain truths, run the riſk of loſing their precious and immortal ſouls, by indulging themſelves in this provoking ſin;

For ſurely to make uſe of the name of God upon every idle, inſignificant occaſion, is to treat it with the utmoſt indignity, and by conſequence, the ſureſt mean to draw down the divine vengeance on their heads. An oath has in all nations, been eſteemed ſo ſacred, that many have choſen rather to die, than break ſo awful an inſtitution. And indeed, how can our lives, our eſtates, our properties be ſecured any other way? To make that cheap therefore, and of no force, is to break at once all truſt and converſe among men; every one would prey upon his neighbour. He that lightly eſteems an oath, ought not to live. What meaſures then can we take with a common ſwearer? He daily convinces us, that the name of God is of no eſteem with him; for the majeſty of heaven, is proſtituted by him to the vileſt purpoſes; he calls the great God to witneſs every trifle, whether truth or falſehood, it is much the ſame to him; his oaths are always ready. What tie, what obligation then is ſolemn enough to bind him? None that I know of; all the remedy we have is, to truſt ſuch a man as little as poſſible, to contemn, to deteſt, to abhor him, to look upon him, in ſhort, as the bane of ſociety.

I am ſurpriſed, that any one who profeſſes, and calls himſelf a Chriſtian, can be guilty of this fruitleſs ſin, which is ſo directly repugnant to the expreſs command of our bleſſed Saviour; for chriſtianity teaches us to be ſo juſt and ſincere, as that the bare aſſertion or denial of a thing may be ſufficient. Can a man then poſſibly take a more effectual courſe to ſhew he is no diſciple of Chriſt, than by habituating himſelf to curſing and ſwearing? Can any thing be a greater diſſervice to the cauſe of religion, than for ſuch as are notorious for this vice, to frequent any Chriſtian aſſemblies? Is it not a diſhonour to our profeſſion, nay, a flat contradiction to it? Does it not rather tend to deſtroy, than any ways promote it? How will the Heathen, or the Mahometan, have the leaſt regard for our God, when we ourſelves treat him with ſuch

open

open and repeated marks of contempt? Which way ſhall we make proſelytes to our moſt holy religion, when ſuch an impious practice is not only ſuffered, but encouraged amongſt us? Of what avail is it, that God has ſtrictly commanded a due and awful reverence to be paid to his name, when men are hardy enough to blaſpheme it in ſport and paſtime? To what purpoſe are all thoſe wholſome laws, that have been made to deter men from it, if there prevails ſuch a backwardneſs to bring offenders to proper puniſhment? In ſhort, whether the impiety of one ſet of men, or the remiſſneſs or connivance of another, be the moſt blame-worthy, is not eaſy to determine.

But let theſe miſtaken, theſe miſerable wretches conſider, that though it is poſſible they may eſcape the puniſhment due to their demerits from men, yet they cannot fly from the judgment of a juſtly incenſed God. And the commiſſion of this ſin cries ſo loudly againſt them, that the glory and honour of God requires ſatisfaction at their hands. Though immediate judgments, indeed, do not commonly fall down upon theſe audacious ſinners, yet inſtances may be produced of ſuch as have been actually ſtruck dead with blaſphemy and oaths in their very mouths. And what a dreadful thing muſt it be, for a man to appear before the awful tribunal of an all-powerful God, and an offended judge, with ſo dreadful a load of ſins upon his head? To think, that the laſt moment of his life was ſpent in curſing, that the juſtice of God overtook him in the actual commiſſion of this dreadful crime, that his laſt breath was ſpent in taking the name of his Creator, his God, and his judge, in vain? Hear what the Pſalmiſt ſays, he whoſe delight was in curſing, finds it at laſt come home to him: he loved not bleſſing, therefore ſhall it be far from him. He cloathed himſelf with curſing, like as with a rayment, and it ſhall come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.

Our bleſſed Saviour aſſures us, that for every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of judgment; what hope of remittance then can they expect, who have a long reckoning of oaths and blaſphemies to ſettle and adjuſt? Was the moſt profligate wretch in life, but ſure he ſhould have the oaths which he vents ſo liberally in all companies wherever he comes, moſt punctually regiſtered; and that he ſhould ſome time or other pay ſuch a fine as the law directs for each of them, he would doubtleſs ſet a watch over the door of his lips; and entertain an awful dread of the ſin of ſwearing; eſpecially if he were conſcious to himſelf, that whenever the demand ſhould come to be made, and he ſhould be utterly incapable of diſcharging the fine, he ſhould be condemned to the moſt painful and ignominious death. And is it not a much more dreadful caſe to fall into the hands of the living God, who knows, who hears his impious inſults, and will at laſt call him to a dreadful account, and deliver him into outer darkneſs, to be tormented of devils?

Other ſins have either profit or pleaſure to recommend them; but the prophane ſwearer cannot pretend there is any temptation for him. The moſt wicked and abandoned, one might think, would readily forego ſuch a ſin as this. The ſwearer gives away his ſoul; he takes pains to be damned; he kicks, in ſhort, at heaven, and is fearleſs of the Almighty. This ſin, moreover, is moſt commonly an indication of an empty and unfurniſhed mind. Oaths are thrown into diſcourſe to fill up thoſe ſentences that would otherwiſe be moſt woefully trifling or ſilly; thus impiety is made a covering for ignorance, and he that has not a talent to be witty, will ſhew at leaſt he has a genius to be wicked.

The ſwearer, perhaps, imagines, that an oath ſounds graceful and bold, and he had rather, it is poſſible, be eſteemed daring than wiſe; but how fooliſh is it for a man to ſhew his intrepidity this way! To prophane a Being who is able to ſtrike him dead in an inſtant!

This

This will prove him horribly raſh and adventurous indeed, but not in the leaſt courageous; for true fortitude is ſhewn in deſpiſing dangers for the ſake of virtue; in doing ſuch actions as juſtice warrants, and as wiſdom guides. If he ſwears only to gain the regard and eſteem of others as wicked and profligate as himſelf, or out of fear of being reproached and ill-treated by his impious companions; if this be all his view, then doubtleſs he ſhews himſelf to be an abject, mean-ſpirited coward indeed, let him affect as much courage as he pleaſes; there is no ſuch mighty terror in high anger, and this noiſy bluſterer will often have a ſhameful occaſion to be ſtruck dumb.

As there are no vices, how enormous ſoever, but ſome men will find excuſes for them; we ſhall proceed to ſhew what the ſwearer generally urges to palliate this abominable ſin.

And firſt, it is alledged by ſome, that when they ſwear, they mean no manner of harm, and that it is rather the reſult of cuſtom, than any natural diſpoſition to prophaneneſs.

The former plea is an aggravation of the guilt, and the latter a moſt pitiful evaſion, an excuſe that a man make for any crime whatſoever; but let him remember, that when ſins are once become habitual, they are in the ſight of God moſt abominable, and of the deepeſt dye.

Some indeed are ſo very cautious, that though they take God's name in vain almoſt every moment, yet they will ſeem to check themſelves, and cry God forgive me for ſwearing ſo, or ſay ſomething to the like effect; and that they imagine to be a ſufficient atonement. But yet give me leave to tell you, ſuch a perſon does not ſeem ſincerely to deſire forgiveneſs; for to aſk forgiveneſs, and to repeat the crime inſtantaneouſly, is doubtleſs an aggravation of the guilt, by adding contempt to the ſin. If we will but give ourſelves the leaſt time for reflection, this muſt appear a moſt miſerable way of making an excuſe.

Some

Some plead, that they never ſwear without ſome extraordinary provocation. But conſider, have not others met with as great, if not greater provocations than you have; and yet they have never indulged their paſſion, but bleſſed God, and prayed for their enemies, in the midſt of their ill treatment. Immoderate anger is a crime in the ſight of God, and oaths and curſes ſurely aggravate the crime. Muſt God's holy name be blaſphemed becauſe you are out of temper? Is this the reverence you pay to an Almighty Being, a bountiful benefactor, a merciful and indulgent father? Ingratitude is of all vices the moſt odious; but to ſpurn at him from whom we receive all the bleſſings we enjoy, is ſo glaring a crime, that no words can expreſs it in its proper colours. Beſides, will your paſſionate ſwearing remove, or remedy thoſe evils that diſturb you? Becauſe men provoke and offend you, muſt you vilify the name of your Maker.

It is pretended by others, that ſwearing on ſome occaſions is abſolutely neceſſary, that their ſervants will not regard their ſpeaking mildly to them, and that when their buſineſs is in a hurry, it cannot be diſpatched without it.

This objection, however, is both falſe and fallacious: ſome, it is true, are ſo unhappily addicted to this abominable vice, that their ſervants and dependents expect an oath from them, as much as they do an order; but where they know their maſter abhors and deteſts the ſin, his word alone is ſufficient. They know he has a ſtrict regard for truth, and are ſenſible that the puniſhment due to their neglect is more ſure, than if they were threatened by ten thouſand oaths to confirm it. Where there is a real power and authority, there ſwearing becomes perfectly needleſs, in order to procure regard; and where there is not, the man that practiſes it, appears noiſy indeed, but at the ſame time makes a moſt comtemptible figure.

As

As to the man who ſwears in common converſation, with the view of being more readily believed, he muſt either be conſcious of his own want of merit, or otherwiſe entertain a very mean and contemptible one of thoſe to whom he makes his applications. A man that has a generous way of thinking will imagine, that ſwearing to the truth of any thing he aſſerts is altogether needleſs and impertinent; nay will look upon it, not only as an offence to thoſe he ſpeaks to, but an high affront to the Almighty.

Some have been ſo wretched as to make this plea for ſwearing, namely, that it gives a man an air of conſequence; and that to be afraid of an oath, when in company with thoſe that are addicted to it, looks unbecoming a bon companion.

This plea, indeed, is too weak to be uſed by any man of ſenſe, were it true; for thoſe perſons muſt be thought ſtrangely void of merit, that would court your good opinion of them by aping of your vices. A generous temper would bluſh to be thought guilty of ſo mean an artifice. But give me leave to ſay, that the whole is abſolutely falſe. Swearing, as we before obſerved, is every where accounted a breach of good manners; and he that would be eſteemed a gentleman, would take it as the moſt heinous affront to be called a deſpiſer of all decency and order. To ſuppoſe, then, that it gives a man an air of conſequence is a very idle and abſurd notion; for nothing in reality can make him more the object of contempt. I hope, therefore, thoſe who are ſo unhappy as to ſet light by the joys of heaven, or imagine the torments of hell a mere bugbear; I ſay, I hope even ſuch, if any ſuch can be, will at leaſt learn decency in their diſcourſe; and though they give up all claim to an hereafter, yet they will have ſome regard for their preſent characters, and avoid the imputation of abandoned wretches, with which all ſuch as are notoriouſly guilty of this abominable ſin are juſtly branded.

Having thus taken notice of moſt of the pleas that are generally made uſe of in defence of this ſin, I flatter myſelf you will very readily

dily allow with me, that the crime is altogether inexcuſable. I ſhall proceed therefore to lay down ſome few directions for the uſe of thoſe who have unhappily habituated themſelves to this ſin, and are deſirous to leave it off.

Think ſeriouſly then, in the firſt place, how deplorable would have been your fate, had God taken immediate vengeance on you, and ſtruck you dead in the actual commiſſion of this ſin. Think again upon the divine threatnings, and that God will moſt aſſuredly puniſh thoſe, and that ſeverely too, who commit it; for he has declared, in the moſt ſolemn manner, that he will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain.

You muſt likewiſe guard yourſelf againſt every ſudden and violent guſt of paſſion; you muſt avoid drinking and gaming, which have a natural tendency to promote the moſt dangerous quarrels and bitter oaths; you muſt be very careful what company you keep, and induſtriouſly avoid all habitual ſwearers. How can they, who love and honour the name of God, and of Chriſt, take delight in ſuch as blaſpheme his name, and contemn his laws?—Never indulge yourſelf in ſwearing upon low and trivial occaſions, though you do it with reverence; think ſeriouſly of the awfulneſs of appealing to an all-ſeeing, and an almighty God.—You muſt not dally with this vice, but reſolve to break yourſelf of it at once. Every conviction you ſin againſt is an additional weight to your guilt.

If you would lay ſome penalty on yourſelf every time you are guilty of this vice, I am perſuaded it would greatly contribute to your cure. The law makes every prophane oath a forfeiture to the poor, and if you, who are addicted to ſwearing, would but lay ſuch a voluntary fine upon yourſelf, you would ſoon feel the good effects of it. But the moſt effectual remedy is prayer; if you pray ſeriouſly, and in a becoming manner, it will fix upon your thoughts ſuch an awful idea of God, that you will not be able to ſpeak lightly, much leſs profanely, of him, to whom you have been paying your adoration.

adoration. Be earneſt in your intreaties, that he will give you a heart to turn from the wickedneſs you have committed, and that by his infinite goodneſs and mercy you may ſave your ſoul alive.

I ſhall beg leave, before I conclude, to offer a few hints to thoſe who are not guilty of this ſin themſelves, in order to ſhew them in what manner they ſhould behave towards thoſe that are.

Whenever you converſe with thoſe who are guilty of this ſin, let them perceive, by your diſregard of what they ſay, that you are diſpleaſed and grieved for them. If they direct their diſcourſe to you, let them ſee, that they really leſſen themſelves in your eſteem by their oaths and imprecations. I will not ſay, it is our duty to reprove every one we hear guilty of this vice; for that, though I am ſorry to ſay it, would be a taſk altogether impoſſible; beſides, to reprove a common ſwearer in public, too often makes him worſe and more outrageous. And our Saviour has told us, that we are not to caſt our pearls before ſwine. But if any one is very remarkable for this crime, take an opportunity to talk to him in a ſober hour, and in private; and if he remains incorrigible, and deaf to all admonition, then his future welfare, as well as the intereſt of religion, obliges you to inform againſt him, that he may be puniſhed as the law directs. Would the principal inhabitants of every town but make examples of a few of the moſt notorious, our ſtreets would not be infeſted as they are, with this deadly poiſon. We ſhould not then hear children liſping out curſes on themſelves and their companions. Such infants, doubtleſs, are ignorant of their danger, and for that reaſon the leſs to be blamed; but then no puniſhment can be inflicted on their impious wretched, and abandoned parents, that with juſtice can deemed too ſevere. It is really a moſt dreadful thing, to find our youth, for want of timely inſtruction and correction, grown old in this vice. The firſt uſe of ſpeech that is taught them, by the example of their wicked parents, is not only to call down curſes upon one another, but to blaſpheme their Creator.

There are none, I am ſenſible, but know this aſſertion to be true; every one hears, every one ſees it; our very churches are polluted too often with this abomination. Since then this evil is grown ſo gigantic, let us endeavour to put a ſtop to this contagion. Let us not ſuffer any who are our dependents, to commit this ſin without the ſevereſt correction; for we ſhall ſave them from much miſchief here, and from God's anger hereafter. Keep no ſervants, employ no perſons who are guilty of this vice; relieve not the poor that are thus guilty of diſhonouring God; but if their families cry out for your charity, at leaſt with your alms, uſe menaces, as well as arguments to deter them from it. If every one would, in their reſpective callings, obſerve the method we have here preſcribed, I am perſuaded we ſhould ſoon ſee a great and happy reformation.

To conclude, let every one ſet a watch before his own mouth, keep the door of his own lips, and take heed that he offend not with his tongue. Let us convince men we are in earneſt by our actions, as well as our words. Let the ſacred name of God be made uſe of with the utmoſt veneration, and have ſuch an awful regard for his divine majeſty, that we may be found guiltleſs and unblameable in his ſight at the laſt day.

SUNDAY XL.

The Sin and Folly of intemperate Drinking.

PROVERBS, XXIII. 20.

BE NOT AMONGST WINE-BIBBERS.

AS the ſin and folly of intemperate drinking is ſo apparent to every one in his ſenſes, it may ſeem perhaps needleſs, either to deſcribe the vice, or to produce any arguments to deter men from it; and I am fully perſuaded, that every one here preſent has already anticipated in his own mind, all I can urge, in order to diſſuade him from indulging in ſo unſeemly a vice; but whilſt it is ſo common, and ſo deſtructive, I conceive, that we cannot employ our time to a more profitable purpoſe, than by taking advantage of the ſober hour, to lay before ſuch unhappy wretches, as too notoriouſly indulge themſelves in this ſhameful practice, not only the utter ruin and deſtruction of their health and reputation; but what is of much greater concern, the loſs, the inevitable loſs of eternal happineſs, which will be the unavoidable conſequence of their ſhameful intemperance.

It is with no ſmall pleaſure that I can obſerve of this vice, as I have before done of prophane ſwearing, that it is almoſt entirely baniſhed from ſuch perſons as have had the happineſs of a liberal education; it is now become a mean, and ſcandalous, as well as an impious practice; and any man who indulges himſelf therein, ſoon

becomes the object of contempt. It is upon this account, I preſume, that we ſo ſeldom hear it attacked from the pulpit; for ſuch perſons as conſtantly attend the publick worſhip of God, are ſeldom guilty of ſo abject, and odious a vice. However, though I hope no one in this aſſembly is ſo unhappy, as that his conſcience ſecretly points out to him—thou art the man;—yet even to ſuch as are no ways affected by the imputation, it may be of uſe to deter them from making any advances towards this abandoned practice.

Drunkenneſs, it is true, is ſo unſeemly a vice, that I am afraid it will be difficult for me to expoſe it, in ſuch terms as may not ſhock the delicacy of thoſe hearers, who happily have but a very imperfect idea of it; however, I conceive it to be a ſubject very neceſſary to be enlarged upon, as the lower rank of people are at this juncture exceſſively addicted to it; inſomuch that it is ſuppoſed, and with very ſtrong and ſubſtantial reaſon, that to this vice alone may be attributed the houſe-breakings, high-way robberies, murders, and all thoſe other wanton ſcenes of inhumanity, which have proved a too public ſcandal and diſgrace to this kingdom for ſome years paſt.

To give you the image or picture of a drunkard, may be thought by many to be altogether needleſs; ſince, with ſorrow be it ſpoken our ſtreets ſwarm with the originals themſelves: but if the univerſality of this vice did not in ſome meaſure take off from the horror of it, how ſhould we cenſure the man, though we pitied him at the ſame time, who is guilty of it? When we ſee him tottering and ſtaring, with his mouth as open as his eyes, perhaps driveling, and doing other unſeemly actions, fit to make his beholders who are not ſo bad as himſelf, ſicken at the ſight of him; if he be not too far gone, as the phraſe is, the ideot is very apt to be mighty fond of every one he meets; and if his ſtation and circumſtances happen to protect him from being turned out of any ſober company into which he may be caſually admitted, he is ſure, if they thought well of him before, that they ſhall have very little reaſon to continue their

good

good opinion; for, in all probability, before he leaves the room, he will entertain them with a particular detail, interlarded with a thouſand oaths, of the number of bottles he can carry off; and inform them how often he has been drunk that week, and what jovial ſouls, that is, what incorrigible ſots he has lately converſed with; and when he has ſtunned your ears with this long bead-roll of nonſenſe, and blown his beaſtly, hot, ſtinking, ſour breath in your face, till you are heartily fatigued with his impertinence, then he lays faſt hold upon you, roars out the moſt private affairs of his family; and though perchance you ſhould be an utter ſtranger to him, yet, if any one has been ſo unguarded as to entruſt him with a ſecret, out it comes, at all adventures, no matter for the conſequence; moreover, to let you know he is of ſome conſideration, he will give you the hiſtory of all his acquaintance, and if he can recollect any one inſtance of their ill conduct, you are ſure to have it with large additions, and if he cannot, perhaps he will make one, to let you underſtand that they are all as bad as himſelf. He concludes, either by overſetting ſome of the company, and tumbling with them on the floor, and by that means giving the reſt an opportunity to retire; or with an invective againſt ſobriety: and ſhould there chance to be any one preſent, remarkable for his deteſtation of ſo unmanly a vice, he directs all his diſcourſe to him, and in the end is ſure to inſult him, and make him withdraw; for it is in vain to contend with a fool in his folly: and all his notable arguments are,—to ſet them in the beſt light,—theſe,—that he is determined to be merry, to keep no company, but the choiceſt ſpirits of the age, to enjoy the preſent life, and take his chance in the life to come. And then perhaps he will hum over an old ſong to prove himſelf in the right, and that ſhall be deemed an over-balance againſt the conſent of all wiſe men, and the dreadful menaces that are denounced againſt ſuch profligates in ſacred writ. A very wiſe ſcheme of life this!—But obſerve him when his head begins to ſettle.—How low are his ſpirits ſunk!

What

What ſecret reſolutions he makes, and how he even deteſts himſelf! When the qualm, however, is once gone off, and he feels his conſcience giving him a check, then he repeats the nauſeous draught again, and thus his life is one continued ſcene of riot and exceſs. In ſhort, he renders himſelf a torment to his family, troubleſome to his acquaintance, and uſeleſs to the commonwealth.

As deſpicable as this image or picture may ſeem to thoſe who have not often been eye-witneſſes of the drunkard's outrageous deportment, yet it is but the out-lines, a very faint and imperfect ſketch of him; and as abſurd and wicked as the practice itſelf of this vice may be, there have not been wanting perſons ſhameleſs enough, and ſo regardleſs of public cenſure, as to vindicate and defend it. I ſhall, therefore, produce ſome of the moſt plauſible of their excuſes for drinking, that you may have an opportunity of being fully convinced, that the beſt of them are but weak and fooliſh.

The firſt and moſt avowed, is called, GOOD FELLOWSHIP; one man drinks to keep another company: but I would aſk ſuch a one, if that man was drinking poiſon, would he venture to pledge him? If he ſays he would not, I muſt tell him, that by a parity of reaſon, he is not to comply with this, for immoderate drinking is rank poiſon, and the bane of youth; it is not always, indeed, attended with inſtantaneous death, but though it works ſlowly, yet it works ſurely, and death at laſt is the reſult; nay, its preſent effects are what a wiſe man would deteſt more than death itſelf; for it works madneſs and frenzy, occaſions caſual abſence of reaſon, and turns the man into a brute: and the meanneſs of ſuch a diſorder, one would think a ſufficient diſcouragement. Reaſon is the life of a man; and to ſtop the pulſe, or ſtifle the breath, is not ſo detrimental, as to extinguiſh ſo great a faculty. Reaſon is the peculiar diſtinction of human nature. What avails the preference we have in ſhape? It is the faculty of the ſoul which principally gives us a ſuperiority over the animal creation. Who would forfeit his honour for ſo paltry

a gratification? Who would chuſe to live beneath the dignity of his ſpecies, though but for an hour? But ſome will ſay, it is ſo far from a degradation, that it exalts them above their ſpecies, adds vigour to their ſpirits, makes them jovial, and caſts of all corroding care; but ſurely, if the mirth be ſuch, as that reaſon muſt be diſcarded for the enjoyment of it, we may juſtly ſay with Solomon, The laughter of ſuch fools is madneſs. For they that will ſwill down bowl after bowl, in order to wind themſelves up to this pitch of felicity, might be glad of a frenzy, if they could but be aſſured, it would prove of the merry ſort. But little do theſe advocates of mirth, theſe choice ſpirits think, what a degree of ſorrow they are all this time reducing themſelves to, frequently in this world, when by their mad frolicks, they are either expoſed to publick ſhame, or are obliged to pay ſome conſiderable fine for the concealment of them: but what is ſtill worſe, they are endangering their eternal ſtate; ſince this mirth will be ſadly accounted for at the laſt day, without a timely and ſincere repentance.

It has ſometimes been alledged, in excuſe for immoderate drinking, that a man does not ſeem to make his friends welcome, unleſs he promotes a briſk circulation of the glaſs.—And here give me leave to put an honeſt queſtion.—Are there not many invitations made and accepted of, with a previous reſolution to drink as long as they can poſſibly ſwallow? I greatly fear that is too often the truth. A late ingenious author has drawn up a letter of invitation, which ſets this matter in its true light; and though at firſt ſight it may look like ſtraining the point a little too hard; yet I conceive, it would too often be no more than the real fact. As it is very ſhort and expreſſive, I ſhall make no apology for inſerting it verbatim; it is couched, therefore in the following terms. "Sir, —— If you "will pleaſe to do me the favour to dine with me, I ſhall do my "beſt, to drink you out of your limbs and ſenſes, to make you ſay "an hundred ſilly things, and play the fool to purpoſe, if ever you

"did

" did it in your life. And before we part, you ſhall be well pre-
" pared to tumble off your horſe, and make your family ſick at the
" ſight of you; and all this for an opportunity of ſhewing, with
" how much friendſhip and reſpect I am your humble ſervant."

This is often the plain Engliſh of an entertainment, and though the kindneſs may look ſomewhat oddly, it is the main drift of the matter, the point is purſued, and the conqueſt boaſted of; and the victor congratulates himſelf on the ſtrength of his brain, and his hale conſtitution. But I humbly conceive, it is rather an argument of no brains at all. Ingenuity, ſo far as it lies in the conſtitution, conſiſts in the warmth of the blood, and in the plenty and fineneſs of the ſpirits: now when ſo extraordinary a ſupply makes no ſenſible alteration, you may rather infer, there was a ſcarcity before. In ſhort, this drinking down the company, is no better than a confirmed habit of vice, or the effects of phlegm and lethargy; and there is nothing to boaſt of, unleſs men will needs glory in their ſhame, which I am afraid is too frequently the caſe.

Another plea too often urged is, that wine drives away ſorrow; but I would aſk what thoſe ſorrows are which it expels? Perhaps they are ſome checks and remorſes of conſcience, which muſt be thus charmed. But we ſhall find ourſelves groſsly miſtaken if we imagine, that the lulling our reaſon aſleep will aſſuage them; we may indeed, by ſuch indirect meaſures, render them imperceptible for a while, but they will ſoon return with double force by the ſuppreſſion. Suppoſe a thief, or a murderer, knew he were purſued, in order to be brought to juſtice, would he, to avoid the melancholy apprehenſions of being hanged, apply himſelf to hard drinking, and in the mean time take no prudent ſtep towards making his eſcape? Or ſhould we not conclude him to be a fool or a madman if he did ſo? This is the very caſe now before us: our conſciences, which we cannot ſtifle, will inform us of our danger; that we muſt ere long be brought before the judgment-ſeat of God; and would it

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not be downright madneſs, if, inſtead of endeavouring to procure our pardon, we ſhould drink away all thoughts of our impending ruin? But ſuppoſe theſe cares ſhould be only worldly ones, namely, that you are diſguſted at the adventures of your life, or the unhappy ſituation of your affairs, and here, in order to relieve yourſelf from the pain of recollection, you endeavour to cloſe the ſcene, to take a quieting draught, and diſmiſs that part of your memory. But this is but a ſuperficial cure; the ſkinning-over of an old ulcer, and nothing more: to trifle with a wound in this prepoſterous manner, is to make way for a mortification: to be intemperate for the eaſe of one's mind, is an equal abſurdity; it is to cure melancholy with madneſs; and yet this is the favourite ſpecific with too many: when they are diſtreſſed in their affairs, and overwhelmed with difficulties, which they deſpair of conquering, they have immediate recourſe to the bottle, as if poverty could be removed by expence. Alas! the virtue of this medicine is quickly loſt, and then the anguiſh returns with double force. If a man is diſſatisfied with his conduct or his income, let him mend the former, and retrench his expences; let him apply himſelf more cloſely to his buſineſs, and not ſink himſelf deeper, multiply his faults, and add a new ſting to his conſcience; for to laviſh away one world after another is a moſt dreadful way of finding relief in the day of adverſity; let us not then, for ſhame, ſo far diſgrace our reaſon, and the religion we profeſs, as to think of ſhaking off our troubles by ſuch an abject and diſhonourable, as well as fruitleſs evaſion.

Another formal plea for this odious vice is the paſſing away of time, which, with too many, is apt to hang upon their hands. This, though it be altogether as unreaſonable, as any hitherto mentioned; yet, by the way, it may ſerve to caſt an odium on a life ſpent in indolence and eaſe, which is, it ſeems, ſo burthenſome a thing, that even this vileſt of employments is preferred before it. This, however, in many, is a very falſe and frivolous excuſe; for they too frequently

waſte their precious minutes in drinking, not only when a leiſure hour will admit, but even when their buſineſs requires the moſt immediate diſpatch: in all, whether actually employed or not, it is an unreaſonable excuſe, if not a falſe one; for there is no one ſo deſtitute of buſineſs, but may find ſomething to do, that may prove a future emolument. He that has no real buſineſs of his own upon his hands, that requires his attendance, may employ himſelf about ſomething or other, that may contribute towards the aſſiſtance and relief of his neighbour. There is no man living, however, but has a ſoul to be ſaved; and if he will but look diligently after that noble and immortal part of him, he need not complain for want of employment. When there are ſo many corruptions to mortify, ſo many unruly paſſions to guard againſt and reſtrain, ſo many temptations, whereof ebrioſity is by no means to be accounted the leaſt, to reſiſt; where there are the graces of God to improve and ſtir up, and former neglects of all theſe to lament and atone for by ſincere repentance; ſure I am, no one with juſtice can alledge, that he has nothing of importance to ſet himſelf about; for all and each of theſe require time; and ſo, moſt men, upon their death-beds find; for thoſe who have all their lives long made it their buſineſs to miſpend their precious hours, would hen give all the world to redeem them. And where Providence has been indulgent, and men are under no abſolute neceſſity of purſuing any worldly affairs with that induſtry and application, as would be laudable in others, God Almighty expects, that a larger portion of their time ſhould be employed in acts of private devotion, as well as attendance on him in his holy temple.

As it is not likely, however, that thoſe perſons of inferior rank and degree, to whom this diſcourſe is peculiarly addreſſed, ſhould have many leiſure-hours to ſpare from their neceſſary avocations, I ſhall inſiſt no farther upon this article, but content myſelf with making only one curſory remark, namely, that what ſmall degree

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of leiſure ſoever they at any time may have, it behoves them to employ it to the benefit of their precious and immortal ſouls, and not to beſtow it in the ruin and deſtruction of them, as thoſe moſt inevitably do, who ſquander away their time in intemperance and exceſs.

It would be an endleſs taſk to enumerate all the ridiculous pleas that have been urged in alleviation of this moſt abominable vice; I ſhall therefore only mention one more. It is alledged by ſome that no trade can be advantageouſly carried on without it. This excuſe, however, were it not frequently inſiſted on, would be too abſurd to deſerve an anſwer; for is there not, for inſtance, abundance of buſineſs, and that of the laſt importance too, tranſacted upon the Exchange, without one ſingle glaſs to confirm the bargain? Though the Dutch are almoſt all either merchants or at leaſt conſiderable traders; yet, though drinking is ſaid to be the vice of their country, they very ſeldom, if ever, ſit down to it, till their affairs are abſolutely diſpatched, and the buſineſs of the day is perfectly over. Many a fair bargain likewiſe is made amongſt our Engliſh merchants over a diſh of tea or coffee; and there are numbers reſident in London, who are men of figure, and as remarkable for their inviolable ſobriety as their immenſe fortunes. This drinking, in order to the promotion of trade, therefore, is, in ſhort, but a mere pretence, an idle excuſe. We are either governed by our paſſions, or overborne by the pleaſure of the company, and then to ward off the imputation, we make buſineſs our plea, and inſiſt, that it is abſolutely neceſſary we ſhould ſettle and adjuſt our accounts with a concluſive bottle. Theſe allegations, however, are all perfectly trivial, and carry no manner of weight with them; for ſuppoſe the various commodities which one man particularly deals in are ſuitable, in regard to their quality and price, for another's purpoſe, will the latter decline dealing with the former becauſe he refuſes to drink glaſs for glaſs with him? Will he withſtand his own intereſt and convenience, and mortify him-

ſelf, becauſe the conſtitution of the man he deals with is not ſo ſtrong as his? No ſurely:—I cannot perceive, but moſt of our eminent tradeſman vend their wares in their reſpective ſhops, advantageouſly enough, without ſetting a bottle upon the counter. Some, indeed, are ſo artful, knaviſh, and deſigning, that they imagine, if the perſons they deal with be in liquor, they ſhall have a more favourable opportunity of over-reaching them, as not being ſufficiently on their guard; and ſo they aggravate their their guilt, by adding one ſin to another. Now that this, in reality, is the intent, is manifeſt; for if diſpatch of buſineſs was their principal or ſole view, they would chuſe to have men of ſenſe and ſobriety to deal with: the embracing, therefore, ſuch a critical conjuncture, when ſtrong liquors have lulled the cuſtomer's reaſon almoſt aſleep, is a too apparent teſtimony of ſome intended fraud, ſome ſecret injuſtice. This clandeſtine method of proceeding, however, frequently, in the iſſue, proves as fooliſh as it is ſinful; for he who drinks hard with another, in hopes of over-reaching him, finds himſelf oftentimes miſtaken, and proves the weaker veſſel; and then he is equally expoſed in his turn, to be the dupe, with this aggravating circumſtance, that he has no one to blame but himſelf for his want of diſcretion. This end of drinking, therefore, is ſo far from becoming any plauſible excuſe, that it is an aggravation of the ſin; for if we ought not to drink to exceſs upon any ſcore whatever, much leſs ſhould we, with ſuch ungenerous, ſuch diſhoneſt intentions.

Having thus, as briefly as I could, laid before you the pleas or excuſes, that are commonly urged for the palliation of this enormous vice, I ſhall proceed to offer ſome reaſons to your conſideration, in order to deter you from being ever guilty of ſo mean-ſpirited a crime.

The firſt reaſon, then, that I have to urge againſt exceſs in drinking is, that we thereby put ourſelves on a level with the brutes that periſh. The heart of man is naturally endowed with generoſity,

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and choice vigorous ſpirits, ſuſceptible of, and fitted for the nobleſt and moſt worthy employments; but this odious vice, enervates at leaſt, if it does not totally extinguiſh that moſt noble vigour: for no ſooner is a man brought under the dominion of wine, but he drowns his rational faculties, and acts in a more deſpicable manner, than any part of the brutal creation; for he either wallows with the ſwine in the mire, or falls ſenſeleſs on the floor in a moment, like one in a lethargic fit; or if not inclined to repoſe, he ſwears and ſwaggers about like a bravo, or one who has unhappily loſt the uſe of his reaſon. When God Almighty firſt formed man after his own image, he ordained, that all other creatures ſhould ſtand in awe of, and be ſubſervient to his will and pleaſure; but ſuch is the depravity of our human natures, that too many, by the indulgence of their appetites, and drinking to exceſs, act inconſiſtent with that power and dominion with which they were originally inveſted, and diſhonour their Maker in the moſt ungrateful manner, by that voluntary ſurrender of their reaſon, whereby they render themſelves inferior to the whole animal creation. Hear what St. Auſtin calls wine-bibbing, or intemperate drinking. "It is a diſtemper of "the head, ſays he, a ſubverſion of the ſenſes, a tempeſt in the "tongue, a ſtorm of the body, the ſhipwreck of virtue, a woful "loſs of time, and a voluntary madneſs, &c.

Another reaſon why men ſhould lead ſober lives, and avoid drinking to exceſs, is, becauſe the effects of intoxicating liquors frequently prove the abſolute ruin and deſtruction of thoſe who indulge themſelves in that vicious habit. Men, through drunkenneſs, not only ſquander away their precious time, but waſte their ſubſtance likewiſe, and in proceſs of time bring themſelves to want, ſhame, and diſgrace. The drunkard ſhall be cloathed with rags, ſays Solomon, who knew the world better than any man living, and be brought to a morſel of bread; he ſhall ſurely come to poverty. Drunkenneſs does not only diveſt a man of his reaſon, that

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diſtinguiſhing mark of his ſpecies, and that ray of the divinity, that rich and fair inheritance conferred on him by the Almighty, as the choiceſt of all his bleſſings; but it alſo deprives him of that ſubſtance, be it more or leſs, which either the provident care of his parents, or his own former induſtry, with the concurrence of God's bleſſing on his honeſt endeavours, had procured for him. But not to dwell on the numberleſs ſorrows and inconveniencies which he naturally brings on his poor diſconſolate wife and helpleſs children, through this extravagant fondneſs for wine and other ſtrong liquors; yet from thence give me leave to remind you likewiſe, proceed apoplexies, gouts, palſies, an involuntary tremor both of hands and feet, and oftentimes inſtantaneous death. O, what a tremendous thing will it be, to reflect, on a death-bed, that theſe pangs, theſe aches, this long train of diſorders are the fatal, though the too ſure and natural effects or fruits of our intemperance! Who hath woe, ſays Solomon? Who hath ſorrow? Who hath contention? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cauſe? Who hath redneſs of eyes? To all which interrogatories, he himſelf makes this immediate reply; they that tarry long at wine; they that go to ſeek mixt wine.

By theſe rhetorical queries the wiſe man ſeems to intimate, that it is a very hard taſk to enumerate the long catalogue of miſeries and diſtempers which are inevitably brought upon us by ſuch riotous, ſuch exceſſive debauches. You have already heard Solomon's and St. Auſtin's ſhort, but comprehenſive account of this deteſtable, this deſtructive paſſion for ſtrong liquors. Now liſten once more to what Origen affirms, in his laconick way, of the ſame inordinate paſſion: Drunkenneſs, ſays he, is the fore-runner of all the evils under the ſun. The wine-bibber, in ſhort, not only acts in all caſes juſt as he is influenced by the ſuggeſtions of the devil, but utters any ſpeeches that riſe uppermoſt, without the leaſt heſitation, though ever ſo fulſome to a chaſte ear, or ever ſo ridiculous

ridiculous and contemptible in the opinion of his fellow creatures. And whilſt he continues thus warmed with liquor, he never reflects, that the iſſue or reſult of his intemperance, is too often confuſion, quarrels, diſloyal invectives againſt the government, or rather againſt the ſovereign on the throne himſelf, whereby he is deemed a diſaffected ſubject, is inevitably ruined and undone, and perhaps falls a victim to his own indiſcretion.

Noah never forgat God until he was intoxicated with ſtrong liquor. Though this ſin alone, and the commiſſion of it but once, in a caſual abſence of his reaſon, is laid to his charge in ſacred writ; yet we find this ſingle tranſgreſſion was of ſo deep a dye, and of ſo heinous a nature, that the Holy Spirit has thought fit to tranſmit this miſcarriage of his, though ſincerely repented of, down to lateſt poſterity, as an everlaſting reproach to that otherwiſe truly pious patriarch, and a perpetual warning to all who came after him, not to tread in his footſteps, in that ſingle particular.

A farther reaſon for our avoidance of this nauſeous crime, is, becauſe it is a cardinal ſin, and as we hinted before, in our quotation from Origen, has a numerous retinue, a long train of other iniquities attending upon it. It is like a ſudden land-flood, which brings down from the higher ground abundance of filth and naſtineſs along with it. Thus, as faith, of all the other graces and virtues, is the moſt excellent and conſpicuous, becauſe it enlivens, and gives them freſh ſtrength and vigour; ſo amongſt the long catalogue of ſins, drunkenneſs ſtands in the front, is the moſt infamous, the meaneſt, and moſt offenſive to God and man. It is not ſo much a particular ſin againſt any ſin le commandment of God, as a violation of all his laws in general; for it warms and quickens every luſt and paſſion, and by its fatal effects expoſes us to the commiſſion of every other ſin without exception. It gives occaſion, nay, to ſpeak truth, is the real cauſe of many ſtrifes and contentions, and too often—which is infinitely worſe—of inhuman murders

murders themſelves, even without provocation, which are the cuſtomary effects of drunken and riotous aſſociations; for when men are once heated with wine, and diveſted of their reaſon, they are mad enough to enter on any attempt, though ever ſo raſh, ſo unnatural, or enormous. Such a monſter as this would make no ſcruple of killing his deareſt and moſt faithful friend, by the perpetration of which cruel act, not only his life would of courſe become a forfeit to the law, but his ſoul likewiſe be expoſed to everlaſting condemnation, without the ſincereſt repentance. If any man, however, ſhould vainly imagine, that he may venture to drink hard, and yet preſerve the uſe of his reaſon, he may as well ſuppoſe, that when he has ſwallowed poiſon, it will have no violent operation.

But above all, drunkenneſs is ſo flagrant a ſin, that it deprives us, without the warmeſt contrition, of the kingdom of heaven. Be not deceived, ſaith St. Paul, neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God. Certainly he is not aſleep, but dead, who is not ſtartled at this denunciation. How will men, addicted to ſtrong drink, be ever capable of reading this text without horror? O think, when you ſee the wine ſparkle in your glaſs, what a cup of wrath may be in the hand of the Lord for thee, in caſe thou abuſeſt the creature which was given thee for thy refreſhment! Though thou wilt not perhaps, now thou art in thy bloom, and in thy ſtrength, believe this important truth; yet the day will come, when thou ſhalt know the price of theſe brutiſh pleaſures, except thou takeſt warning, and doſt forſake them before it be too late.

I think it highly requiſite, before I come to a concluſion, to obſerve, that it is not only ſuch an enormous degree of drunkenneſs, which renders men incapable of either ſtanding or ſpeaking that is to be deemed a ſin; but every lower act of intemperance, whereby the underſtanding is more or leſs impaired and affected; whether

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by obnubilating it, and thereby rendering it leſs fit for its proper function; or by elevating it too much, that is, by making it light and airy, and too fond of apiſh and ridiculous mirth; or what is worſe, by enflaming it to rage and reſentment. Theſe little excurſions, or whatever flights may contribute towards a man's running counter to due reflection, are to be aſcribed to this ſin of intemperance, and exceſs in drinking.

Thus having given you ſome few of the many argumentt that might be produced, to deter you from mingling with wine-bibbers, I ſhall now offer a word or two of exhortation to thoſe, who, though they may too unhappily have formerly given into this vice, are, notwithſtanding, now duly ſenſible of their error, and very deſirous of making a thorough reformation.

Arm yourſelves then with recollection, and be always upon your guard; make a ſtrong reſolution in your defence, which in moſt caſes is attended with ſucceſs. Have a care of a weak complaiſance, and of being as the general phraſe is, good-natured beyond reaſon. Be not overborne by importunity; never ſurrender to a jeſt, nor make the company maſter of your conſcience. Venture to be ſo moroſe, as to maintain the reaſon of a man, and the innocence of a Chriſtian. It is no diſgrace to be healthy in a common infection. Singularity in virtue, and ſanctity of manners is highly praiſe-worthy. Beſides, after you have withſtood but one ſhock or two, your companions will deſpair of ſucceſs, and applaud your reſolution. As a further preſervative conſider the advantage of temperance. How clean and unembarraſſed does it keep the ſenſes, and makes them diſcern the object with greater perſpicuity and ſatisfaction! it appears with life in the countenance, and decorum in the perſon: it gives you the command of your head, ſecures your health, and duly qualifies you for the proſecution of any buſineſs you take in hand. Theſe conſiderations, with the aid and aſſiſtance of God's grace, which you are to implore, in the firſt place, will

contribute towards your reformation, and be ſufficient motives to deter you from the practice of a crime, that is, in itſelf, ſo diſreputable amongſt the politer part of mankind, and ſo odious in the ſight of God, that unleſs timely repented of, will not only render you moſt miſerable in this life, but in that likewiſe which is to come. That every ſoul therefore here preſent, who may poſſibly have indulged himſelf in ſome unguarded hour, in the commiſſion of this debaſing ſin, may from henceforth make a ſolemn, religious, and invariable reſolution to fly from it, as he would from a a general contagion, God of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits and mediation of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, to whom, with the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt juſtly due, all might, majeſty, dominion, and power, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY XLI.

A Picture of the World.

JOB, XIV. 1.

MAN, THAT IS BORN OF A WOMAN, IS OF FEW DAYS, AND FULL OF TROUBLE.

THOUGH every one's experience loudly dictates to him, that misery and sorrow await the whole race of man, yet we almost universally entertain too high an opinion of this life. It is with difficulty and reluctance that we are convinced of what we wish may not be true; and we flatter ourselves for that reason, that some time or other we shall be perfectly happy here. We imagine, that if this or that particular obstacle was but once removed, our present state and condition would then be sufficiently comfortable. But alas! we forget that if those evils, with which we are actually encumbered, were removed, we should still be liable to others, that we know not of; and that even the possession of what we ardently wish for, might not only be attended with some unforeseen inconveniencies, but create in us some more violent desires, and plunge us into deeper troubles.

It may be objected, indeed, that since human nature is daily exposed to so many calamities, and utterly incapable of perfect happiness in this world; that forasmuch as the greatest enjoyments which we possess, arise from the pleasing hope and expectation of some earthly happiness yet to come; such hopes are absolutely necessary to sup-

port and carry us through this vale of tears with ſome tolerable degree of comfort; it is, therefore an ungrateful taſk to awaken any one out of ſuch an alluring dream; to ſet the calamities of this life full in his view, and endeavour to perſuade him, that all the fair hopes he had conceived of happineſs were ill-grounded, and that all the joys he may expect here are only airy viſions, that will vaniſh in the moment he attempts to embrace them.

I ſhould very readily allow this to be a ſubſtantial objection to all diſcourſes of this nature, had we no joys to hope for but thoſe in this life; but ſince our indulgent Creator has given us aſſurances of eternal happineſs; of joys unſpeakable, and full of glory, in a future ſtate; of a reſt hereafter, which nothing can diſturb; ſince he has graciouſly pointed out the way for our attainment of this happineſs, and that in ſo plain a manner, that nothing but wilful blindneſs can poſſibly make us miſtake it; and ſince, in a word, an over eager purſuit after earthly enjoyments too often proves a very great impediment in our ſearch after another and a better ſtate; it muſt, doubtleſs, be highly neceſſary, as well as uſeful, for men ſometimes to be reminded, that true happineſs is no where to be found but in heaven; and that whilſt they are ſearching to find it here, they are running into a fatal miſtake, which will inevitably plunge them into miſery and deſtruction. I ſhall therefore take occaſion, from theſe conſiderations, to dwell a little on this ſubject, and demonſtrate to you, that holy Job's aſſertion in our text, proceeded from long experience, and a thorough inſight into human nature.

In order, therefore, to wean us from a too inordinate love of this life, let us conſider, that they, who live the greateſt number of years have but a ſhort life on earth. Man that is born of a woman is but of few days,—a little time paſſes away in the eaſe and innocence of infancy and childhood. A little more, and the bloom of youth is loſt and gone; a little more weakens the ſtrength of riper manhood; and if we live ſtill longer than this, yet a little time lays

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the infirmities and decays of old age in the ſilent grave.—Let us but compare the duration and continuance of ſome inanimate things with the life of man, and we ſhall, doubtleſs, entertain a more juſt and adequate idea of its contemptible ſhortneſs. How often do the works of our own hands ſubſiſt, whilſt we ourſelves are crumbled into duſt and aſhes? We contrive them for our eaſe and comfort, and in a little time leave them behind us for we know not whom.—We live in houſes, we meet in churches, that were built by perſons, whoſe very names are now perhaps wholly forgotten; we read books, written by men, who were once as lively and active as ourſelves; though at preſent they are dead, and have lain buried beneath the earth for ſome hundreds of years.—How many generations have lived upon the earth, which are now dead and gone, and yet the earth remains! For a while they had a portion here, and then reſigned it to others, and they after a while have reſigned it in their turn again.—How many lives has the courſe of this one ſun meaſured, and yet continues to run his race! Some thouſands of years has that moſt radiant and glorious luminary been a burning light;—when alas! we are but as creatures of yeſterday; and how much longer after us the earth and the ſun may laſt, it is not in the power of human wiſdom to determine. But if we conſider the infinite duration of the ever glorious Jehovah, who is from everlaſting to everlaſting, who always was, is, and ever ſhall be,—O! how juſtly may we deſpiſe the ſhortneſs or our preſent exiſtence!—The longeſt life of man is much more inconſiderable to the Almighty, than one day paſt is to us, nay leſs than a watch in the night, or a few hours loſt in ſleep; in ſhort, time itſelf, in its utmoſt extent, is as nothing when compared with eternity.

Moreover, this life, ſhort as it is, is daily expoſed to ſorrow and trouble. And this will moſt evidently appear, when we reflect on the weak and fluctuating nature of every thing here below. To inſtance firſt, in the frailty of our mortal bodies.—I may venture to affirm

affirm, that the diſeaſes incident to the human frame are innumerable. Should all that have been felt on this occaſion be recounted, yet we could not be aſſured that there would be no additional misfortunes. Every part of us harbours the ſeeds of mortality. We are very eaſily diſordered, and very often ſo.—An infected air, too intenſe an heat, or too violent a cold, ſoon influences and affects our weak conſtitutions.—A ſudden diſappointment, nay, an unexpected turn of good fortune can throw us into diſorder.—Labour and care may waſte, ſloth and luxury may enervate and impair our ſtrength.—If we are not expoſed to the injuries and oppreſſions of penury and want; yet our very abundance may prove fatal to us. The moſt trifling accident may not only wound, but bring us to the grave. And moreover, theſe numberleſs bodily ills, from which no earthly power can protect us, are attended with very uneaſy and afflicting circumſtances. They often render us not only a burthen to our friends, but to ourſelves; they debar us of our liberty, torment us with pain, and deprive us of the ſenſe and enjoyment of pleaſure; they deface our beauty and take away our ſtrength. Beſides, the tedious and loathſome preſcriptions of the phyſician are oftentimes as irkſome and ungrateful as the diſeaſe itſelf, which we labour under.—And after all, how weak is the power of art!—How uncertain a help to us?—Death at laſt prevails againſt us, and then, if we have not laid up for ourſelves a treaſure in heaven, how dreadful, how deplorable is our ſtate and condition!

The great inconſtancy of our tempers is another ſource of much trouble. Now we moſt ardently love, and impatiently deſire, what we have not, and look down with an eye of contempt and diſguſt on what we have; we are apt to think the good we enjoy is altered, when it is only our palled and diſtempered appetites that deprive us of the true reliſh of it; and, in ſhort, ſo capricious are moſt men, even thoſe who have few or no real evils, that they will find out imaginary ones to torment and perplex them.

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The wickedneſs of mankind is alſo another very fruitful cauſe of miſchief and ſorrow to others, as well as to themſelves.—From hence proceed injuſtice, rage, envy, ambition, covetuouſneſs, pride, rebellions, perſecutions, and the like. Theſe occaſion the orphan's tears, the widow's ſighs, and the groans of the oppreſſed. It would be endleſs to enumerate all the evils mankind bring upon one another:—the ſlanders, back-bitings, revilings, and falſe teſtimonies, with a thouſand other evils that attend a wicked and malicious tongue. Man has not a greater foe than man. From hence proceed commotions and bloody wars, battles and murders, and the numberleſs calamities that are the unavoidable conſequences of rapine and confuſion.

The diſorders of nature and the elements are another cauſe of our miſery and affliction. Sometimes the air infects us with noiſome and peſtilential diſeaſes. The waters at other times overwhelm us with impetuous inundations. In one place the earth opens and ſwallows up the miſerable inhabitants. In another, ſubterraneous fires break out, and lay waſte the affrighted country. Sometimes the winds ariſe, and bury us in the ruins of our habitatations. Sometimes we are parched with immoderate heats; at other times, chilled and benumbed with long and exceſſive colds. Thus all things in nature, at times, ſeem to reſent and puniſh us for the affronts, which we wilfully, or at leaſt careleſsly offer the ſovereign of the univerſe; and thoſe things which were originally intended for our comfort and ſupport, are productive of ſorrow, trouble, ſickneſs, and death itſelf.

Having thus briefly demonſtrated that our lives on earth are beſet with ills, and covered with misfortunes, I ſhall conclude the ſad tale of woe with preſenting to your mind's eye A PICTURE OF THE WORLD.—A picture in miniature—and its motto—BEHOLD! ALL IS VANITY. A picture indeed more melancholy than that of this

this globe, ſcarce clear of the chaos, or labouring afterwards under all the wrongs and diſgraces that an univerſal deluge could inflict.

Behold then a world, where the inhabitants are not differenced by happineſs and miſery, but only by the different degrees, and various colours of miſery univerſal. Where the memory is clouded with black ideas of the paſt, the imagination overlooks the preſent, and the underſtanding, through mercy, is blinded to the future. Where every paſſion may be called Legion, for its evils are many. Where men almoſt univerſally lay aſide intellectual pleaſures; are moſt ardent deſirers of happineſs, and yet ſubſiſt it on the moſt impotent half of their natures. Where anxiety of thought damps ſenſual pleaſure, and ſenſual pleaſure increaſes anxiety of thought, and impairs our ſtrength to ſupport it too. Where the ſoul and body are in perpetual hoſtilities, aggrieving each other; and external accidents ſeem ſuperfluous to our miſery. Thus the poor man, like devoted Jeruſalem, beſieged without, and divided within, is a complication of infelicity.

Behold a world! where ſucceſs muſt be procured by our infinite care, and ruin follows on the contrary; ſo that all the ſad choice indulged to mankind, is of infinite care or deſtruction. Beſides the more we have of credit, wealth, or power, the more we may loſe; nor is any man entirely free from the apprehenſions of it; ſo that our poſſeſſions imply, and provide for our miſery. Where an independant pleaſure is very ſevere, a dependant very frail. Wher e pleaſure often exacts ſuch hardſhips from her votary, that auſterity cannot improve upon them. Where nothing pleaſes but in proſpect, and to pleaſe in proſpect only, is not to diſappoint alone, but to deride us too. Where what exalts the ſpirits ſhortens life by that expence, and what depreſſes makes the ſhorteſt life too long. Where days are long, yet life is ſhort. Where we ſtand as in a battle, thouſands daily falling round us, and yet we forget our own mortality, nay are hardened into an inſenſibility of it, by the very proofs

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of its approach, and ſtart, like David, when we hear, THOU ART THE MAN. Where experience, which is truly the greateſt bleſſing of life, is the ſevereſt diſcipline of it too; and diverſion, which is ſuppoſed a bleſſing, only ſignifies, that to ourſelves we are inſupportable. Where ſorrow is as the ſtem of life, joy but as its flower, expected at remote ſeaſons only—then often blighted, or if it bloſſoms, in blooming dies. Where objects, as well as appetites decay, or if they laſt, laſt not to us through the fickleneſs of our choice. Where we are yearly burying ſome favourite amuſement or pleaſure; and they that ſucceed are leſs exquiſite and full as mortal.—Where we ſpend moſt of our days in climbing the hill of our fortune, which ſuſpends by labour any ſerious thought; and when we have climbed it, and are about to change toil for enjoyment, we ſtart to ſee our grave ſo near us on the other ſide. Where life with moſt men is to come till it is paſt.

Behold a world! where the grave employments of mankind are but ſtrenuous follies; nor different from thoſe of children, but by their magnitude and their guilt. Where the ſeveral occupations of life are but fortifications againſt want, and often frail ones too. Where the infirmities of our bodies demand and ſupport one profeſſion—the infirmities of our mind another. Where the very elements wage war againſt us, and have their inundation—their ſhipwreck—their earthquake—their famine—their peſtilence—their volcanos, and their conflagration.—Where we cannot make way from our doors, but through the cries of indigence or diſeaſe. Behold a world! where hoſpitals and bedlams are public neceſſaries. Where the very appellations of a large part of mankind cannot be heard without compaſſion—widows! orphans! where tears are a diſtinction of the whole ſpecies from other creatures. Where age ſhews its injuries like the hoary oak, and youth often languiſhes like a tempeſt-beaten flower, culled from the ſmiling court, the

feſtal banquet, the ſoothing careſſes of friends, the gaze of applauding multitudes, and blaſted with a ſtroke.

Behold a world? where hiſtory, for the moſt part, is nothing but a large field of misfortune, and to dip into almoſt any page of it is to dip into blood, perſecutions, inquiſitions, treaſons, aſſaſſinations, ſieges, ſervitudes, and ſuch like. Where half the travels that have been undertook, half the deſigns that have been enterprized, half the volumes that have been written, have been refuges from uneaſineſs of heart, and are not more the monuments of human wit than of human infelicity.

Behold a world! where—enmity is ſincere;—friendſhip often—a name;—and it is ruin to truſt thoſe, whom not to truſt is almoſt a crime,—ſay a relation!—a friend!—a brother!—where many fall from credit, fortune, life, with Cæſar's exclamation—and this from THEE!—where provoking our foes has not ruined half ſo many as confiding in thoſe of a contrary character. He needs no foe who is at the mercy of his friend. Where more hearts pine away in ſecret anguiſh for unkindneſs from thoſe who ſhould be their comforters, than for any other calamity in life. Where bills of mortality would ſcarce be mournful, if bills of private calamity were in uſe.

Ah! behold a world! where the fond mother to-day looks with tranſport on the reward of her long labour, and painful travail, which changes, perhaps to-morrow, the cradle for the grave. Where the feeble father follows a favourite, an only daughter, the delight of his eyes! the reſt of his age! to her long home, which he perhaps has wiſhed for himſelf in vain; and ſheds thoſe tears on her aſhes, which ſhould expreſs his joy for the happy diſpoſal of her in life. Or perhaps the caſe is ſtill worſe; he ſees her youth, and beauty, and innocence, fallen into arms, to him more dreadful than thoſe of death. Where the ſon of ſome great houſe, its hope, its joy, and its ſupport, the ſole heir of riches, titles, and golden

golden ſchemes, falls immaturely, graſped by death. Where many a numerous family lives in innocence, peace, plenty, reputation, under the wing of an indulgent, prudent, and induſtrious father: the father dies—they are ſcattered like a ſheaf of corn when the band is broke, and become the prey of guilt, want, anxiety, and ſhame. Where the comforts of life have their pangs, their jars, jealouſies, interruptions, decays, extinction. Where grudge, animoſity, and revenge wound deep, but deeper when they wound relation, friendſhip, love; for love has its barbarities, and frequently may be miſtaken for hatred by its effects. There are ſometimes malignant tempers in families; ſuch domeſtick maladies are like ulcers in the vitals; extremities cannot cure them, for they cannot be cut of.

Behold a world! where the night is an idle dream, and the day little better. Where every one is witneſs or patient of affliction; ever telling ſad tales of others, till he becomes a tale himſelf, the tale of a day! and then is utterly forgotten. HE LIVED—AND HE DIED—is an epitaph for much the greateſt part of mankind. Where he that has reached his meridian is one of a thouſand—his friends and relations lie dead around him; half of his converſation is gathered from the tomb. What are the gay, the young, the beautiful, the brave, the learned, the wiſe, the good, in which he once perhaps was rich—what are they now?—A tear! a ſigh!

Behold a world! where real evils are frequent—imaginary, perpetual. Where the happieſt thanks ſome other's wretchedneſs for putting him in mind, that he is not the moſt wretched himſelf. Where I was happy, a few may poſſibly ſay, I ſhall be happy—moſt ſay—I am happy—none. Now if none are happy on the preſent, it is a demonſtration that happineſs is abſent from us all. The preſent is all that our parent nature properly gives us, and that like peeviſh children we will not taſte. Thus between the law of our condition, and the perverſeneſs of our temper, we are very poor, ſubſiſting,

or rather ſtarving our thin happineſs on dreams and ſhadows of good to come; certainly never to come proportionate to our conceptions of them. Where to have any chance for happineſs a man muſt poſſeſs the world, or deſpiſe it; now the contempt of it in him that poſſeſſes it not, is a cheat, he does not heartily contemn it; he miſtakes his ill-will for contempt: and what is as unfortunate, he that poſſeſſes it does contemn it; but not from wiſdom but weakneſs, which has not the ſkill to reliſh its enjoyments as they deſerve. Where men ſeek not the means of ſerving others, but an excuſe for not ſerving them: and words change their nature, and do not reveal, but cover the mind; the paſſions themſelves, thoſe betrayers of truth are taught to act a part, and the very eye, that natural window of the ſoul, can dart a lye, has a ſkreen before it, that you may not ſee through. He only, who diſcovers his own intereſt gives you a key to his heart. In a word, where the honeſt man, who alone is worthy of good, if he judges of men by himſelf, is undone. This may be called ſatire played of for Chriſtian doctrine; but by the ſame rule the ſcripture is ſo too. Proceed we then with our picture.

Behold a world! where to diſſemble injuries, is the greateſt ſhock to nature, and ſhame to honour, yet at the ſame time the greateſt art of life. Where he that has not learned the world muſt go out of it, or be a jeſt, or unfortunate in it. He that has learned it, has learned it with diſcipline, and by that time he is well maſter of his ſubject, his candle is put out. It is hard to learn the world, but harder to unlearn it; and not to unlearn it will one day prove moſt fatal. Where we will not believe YESTERDAY, but hope favourably of TO-MORROW; as if then there would be a new ſun, a new nature, a new ſelf. Where, at the ſeveral tides of good fortune, the head tells the heart,—well! now we are happy: which the heart ſcarce believes, or believes it implicitly. Whenever we ſay to ourſelves, let us ſit down and enjoy life, we diſcover the cheat,

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like one deluded by perſpective, by bringing it to the touch. Nothing will do; buſineſs, conſidering paſſion and accident is certainly a toil; idleneſs is worſe, and books a weak reſource. Where multitudes—ſtrange! and ridiculous! but for the horror of it, complain they have nothing to do—when every ſtep is a ſtep towards a grave—every minute an approach to an eternity. Beſides, if men well knew the buſineſs of this world, and would acquit themſelves like maſters in it—want of time would be their great complaint. We ſhall conclude by ſaying what is moſt true; that human life is like a diſhoneſt creditor, it puts off our youth and manhood with lyes from day to day, then owns the cheat, and gives our age an abſolute denial.

Should this account be juſt, as we think it is, what is human happineſs? A word! a notion! a day dream! a wiſh! a ſigh! a theme to be talked of! a mark to be ſhot at, but never hit! a picture in the head! a pang in the heart of man! Wiſdom recommends it gravely—learning talks of it pompouſly—our underſtanding liſtens to it eagerly—our affection purſues it warmly—and our experience deſpairs of it irretrievably. Imagination perſuades ſome that they have found it, but it is while their reaſon is aſleep. Pride prevails with others to boaſt of it, but it is only a boaſt, by which they may deceive their neighbours, but not themſelves. Felicity of conſtitution, and ſweetneſs of manners, make the neareſt approach to it, but even this is only an approach—fortune—the nature of things—the infirmities of the body—the paſſions of the mind—the dependance on others—the prevalence of vice—the very condition of uncorrected humanity forbids the embrace. Wine, beauty, muſic, pomp, ſtudy, diverſion, buſineſs, wiſdom, all that ſea or land, nature or art, labour or reſt can beſtow, are but poor expedients to heave off the inſupportable load of an hour, from the heir of an eternity! If the young, or unexperienced, or vain, or profligate only were ſubject to this weakneſs, it were ſomething: but when the

the learned, the wiſe, the grave, and the grey, it ſhocks! it mortifies! and our mind turns from its purpoſe with ſhame and pity. In a word, the true notion of human happineſs explained, is itſelf one of the ſtrongeſt proofs of our miſery. For how can we ſpeak more adequately of it, than by ſaying, it is that of which our deſpair is as neceſſary as our paſſion, for it is vehement and inextinguiſhable. Now ardently to thirſt, and unavoidably to deſpond, with regard to the ſame thing, and that thing of conſequence ſupreme, is the conſummation of infelicity. I dare pronounce to you but one ſolid pleaſure in life, and that is, in doing your duty to God and man. How miſerable then, how unwiſe, how unpardonable are they, who make that one a pain?

This picture of the world was drawn by a moſt able maſter. Every ſentence is a truth; every period a ſermon, which, if attended to, flaſhes conviction on the mind. It has, we hope, received no greater injury from our hands, than merely to make it proper to be exhibited from this place.

That we may derive good from thoſe very evils, and receive the happy fruits of joy and comfort, from thoſe ſorrow and miſeries, with which we are ſo ſurrounded, ſhall be the buſineſs of a ſhort moral application.

Since then we cannot but be ſenſible, that this life is unavoidably expoſed to ſorrow and affliction, that no ſtate is free from anxieties and trouble; that we are not ſure of one moment's peace; that our lives are, at beſt, but ſhort and tranſitory; that we are in the midſt of many and great dangers; and that nothing but the providence of God can protect and ſecure us from becoming a prey to our potent adverſaries; theſe conſiderations ſhould fill our hearts with a juſt contempt of this tranſitory life, and prompt us to ſecure, as far as in us lies, the enjoyment of a better, and one more laſting. To view this life in a fair and impartial light, to look upon it as it actually is, embittered with cares and fatigues, will not only mitigate our

grief for the departure of thoſe that are near and dear to us, but reconcile us to our own deaths, when God ſhall think fit to call us to himſelf. Theſe truths will help us to endure with patience the evils and inconveniences which at any time afflict us.—They will teach us to ſay, ſhould theſe evils, which I now labour under, be removed, I ſhall be expoſed to others, which, perhaps, may be heavier, and too great for me to bear; that portion of ſorrow with which it has pleaſed the Almighty to afflict me, I will humbly ſubmit to, leſt, by a too reſtleſs endeavour to throw off my burthen, I ſhould render the weight of it inſupportable.

Again, the calamities to which this preſent life is daily expoſed, ſhould perſuade men to the ſteady practice of religion and virtue; for to keep a conſcience void of offence towards God, is our beſt and ſureſt conſolation in the day of diſtreſs. It is, doubtleſs, a very aggravating circumſtance for a man to reflect, that he owes his calamities to himſelf; that they are the reſult of his own raſhneſs and folly; the effects of his own inordinate paſſions, his darling vices, or unruly appetites, and ungovernable deſires; that notwithſtanding he lives in the moſt deplorable ſtate, yet he can expect no relief from death itſelf; but on the contrary, that he muſt exchange the miſeries of this life, for the torments of another; that he ſhall be conſigned to that infernal abyſs, where the worm never dies, and where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth for evermore.—The good man, however, has no room for ſuch agonizing fears, ſuch dreadful apprehenſions as theſe; though troubles and ſorrows may aſſault him here; yet they are made lighter from the conſideration, that death will ſoon put an end to all his misfortunes, and convey him to thoſe manſions of bliſs which are prepared for the righteous.

How will that man triumph over the dangers and afflictions of this world, who puts his whole truſt and confidence in God! who firmly believes that an omnipotent Being is his guardian and protector!

protector! and that he is not abſolutely deſtitute, and altogether expoſed to the many evils that ſurround him! that no misfortune can ever befal him, but by the permiſſion of his God, his faithful friend, his indulgent father, and all-bounteous benefactor! A wiſe man will always reflect, that what evils ſoever ſhall attend him, they will in the end turn either to his ſpiritual or temporal advantage; and, indeed, we find by experience, that the greateſt comfort of a man's life has been often brought about by means the moſt improbable, nay, the moſt ſeemingly oppoſite that could poſſibly be deviſed;—that misfortunes have ſometimes given a man a glorious opportunity of conquering and ſubduing ſome unruly paſſion, or inordinate affection, which he could not before get the maſtery of; and has brought to light ſome ſhining virtues that would have lain latent, and for ever concealed in the ſun-ſhine of proſperity.

To conclude, to take heed to our ways, and ſecure to ourſelves a life of happineſs hereafter, is the beſt uſe we can poſſibly make of this Picture of the World; and though this life be ſhort and tranſitory, daſhed with gall, and mingled with ſorrows and misfortunes; yet if we do no not delude ourſelves by unneceſſary delays, and if we will but diligently apply ourſelves to the great work of our ſalvation, we need not deſpair of eternal felicity. And how great a gain, what benefits and advantages it will be to employ our lives in the unwearied practice of religion and virtue, will appear from hence, that ſuch a deportment will greatly abate the anguiſh of our misfortunes here, and will moſt aſſuredly entitle us to a crown of glory hereafter.

" Do thou then, O God of all mercies, who knoweſt us to be ſet " in the midſt of ſo many and great dangers, that by reaſon of the " frailty of our nature we cannot always ſtand upright, grant to " us ſuch ſtrength and protection, as may ſupport us in all dangers, " and carry us through all temptations, through Jeſus Chriſt our " Lord." Amen.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY XLII.

The great Commandment.

MARK, XII. 30.

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH: THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

AS this ſolemn commandment is very plain and explicit, and at the ſame time very comprehenſive; we ſhall refer you to the Evangeliſt himſelf for the motives that induced our bleſſed Lord to deliver down to us this heavenly, this important rule for our conduct. It ſhall be our buſineſs to illuſtrate the full import and extent of it, and then demonſtrate to you, that all mankind are indiſpenſably bound to love the Lord their God in the manner above particularly expreſſed; for this reaſon alone, were no other to be urged, becauſe nothing inferior to God can poſſibly make men happy.

To love God with all our heart, is to love him with an unfeigned affection, adequate in ſome reſpects, to the tranſcendent excellency of his divine nature, and his infinite goodneſs and loving kindneſs towards us. To love him with all our ſoul, and with all our mind, is to permit nothing to rival him in our affection; to love nothing comparable to him, nor any thing indeed but what he is pleaſed to

ſuffer us to love, and that no longer, nor in any greater degree than meets his approbation. It is to place the moſt alluring enjoyments of this life infinitely below him in our eſteem, and readily, as well as chearfully to part with them all in perfect obedience to his bleſſed will. To love him with all our ſtrength, is to delight in his ſervice, to worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth, and to employ our time in the contemplation of his infinite perfections; ſo to admire thoſe glorious attributes, by which he is pleaſed to make himſelf known to us, as entirely to devote ourſelves to his will and pleaſure; chearfully to follow the guidance and direction of his unerring wiſdom; to put our whole truſt and confidence in his all-ſufficient providence; to caſt our cares entirely upon him; humbly and patiently to reſign ourſelves to his divine diſpenſations, and in every thing to ſubmit our own imperfect reaſon to his infinite wiſdom, with a full acquieſcence in whatever he would have us to be, or think, or act. In a word, zealouſly to endeavour at the promotion of his honour and glory, and the intereſt of his kingdom, and to copy his grand exemplar as cloſely as the infinite diſtance between the deity and our human nature will admit. This we take to be "loving God "with all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all our mind, "and with all our ſtrength;" and this the obedience and ſubmiſſion which is required to this GREAT COMMANDMENT.

That it is the great and uncontroulable deſire of every man to be happy is paſt all queſtion; true felicity is the center to which we all naturally tend, and what we either love or hate, purſue or avoid, is wholly with a view to that great and important end. And as happineſs is the great end, ſo love is the powerful inſtrument or means whereby we come to attain it to any degree of perfection. By love we are internally united to all ſuch objects as we conceive to be moſt alluring and moſt excellent. It is our love for ſuch objects that inflames our affection, and prompts us to ſeek after the enjoyment of them. It is love that urges us to purſue them with the

the utmoſt alacrity. For our moſt ardent deſires always follow the nature and tendency of our love, and join their forces to accompliſh what this their great leader commands; and therefore it is a concern of the laſt importance to us, that this great leader be directed aright; that this governing paſſion be ſet upon ſuch things alone, as it ought to be; for in caſe it ſhould be miſtaken in its choice, and placed on ſome improper object; an object altogether unworthy of it, and incapable of making us happy; all our other faculties or powers will be engaged in no other or better purpoſe than to fill us with ſhame and confuſion, and diſappoint our moſt exalted hopes and expectations: and indeed, we are ſo exceedingly prone to be deceived in thoſe courſes which we commonly take for the attainment of our deſires, that no care can poſſibly be too great towards our ſetting out right at firſt. One great reaſon why we are thus too frequently and too groſsly miſtaken in our way, and the various paths we are apt to purſue, in order to attain the end, may be this,—that we are reſtleſs and impatient till our wiſhes are actually accompliſhed; which hurries us on with too much precipitation in the purſuit of every thing that ſeems to lead thereunto; though it tends only to the gratification of our ſenſual appetites. Sometimes, for inſtance, eſpecially in the ſpring of life, when our ſpirits are moſt lively and active, we are very warm in our purſuit of PLEASURES, in all their various forms, and vainly imagine, that they will contribute, in a great meaſure at leaſt, towards making us happy: but alas! how cloying; nay, how loathſome and diſguſtful does every one ſoon experience this to be! How ſoon are we ſatiated with the moſt alluring enjoyments of ſenſe! how continually are we exchanging one for another, in a tedious circle! Are we not beholden to a ſtudied variety for the reliſh of all enjoyments that are thus tranſitory; ſince any one of them, if dwelt upon for any time, will not only become inſipid, but actually diſpleaſing; and we are reduced to the neceſſity of making up what is deficient in the pleaſures themſelves, by the

dint of fancy and opinion? But then, when the vigour and bloom of youth are converted into the infirmities of old age; when our blood begins to grow cold and languid; when our ſpirits are impoveriſhed; and in a word, when we are viſited by diſeaſes, and our ſenſes are grown dull and inactive; then corporeal pleaſure ceaſes of courſe; and the moſt ſprightly amuſements have perfectly loſt their reliſh. And now, what a deſpicable kind of happineſs is that, which is inevitably loſt at the approach of old age? And the more freely a man has indulged himſelf in the gratification of his ſenſual appetites, whilſt in his bloom, and his powers were ſtrong, the more likely are thoſe paſt enjoyments to terminate, if not in diſeaſes, poverty, and ſhame, yet in a comfortleſs death; and without a timely and ſincere repentance, in a tremendous reckoning at the day of judgment.

Some men, when they are ſatiated with a long and tedious purſuit after pleaſures, begin to entertain thoughts of AMBITION, and grow indefatigable in their ſearches after titles and preferments. Yet wherein lies the intrinſic value of grandeur? Will a wiſe man barter the calm felicities of life for empty pomp? Will popular applauſe extorted from a ſenſeleſs multitude add one virtue or excellency to the object of their adoration, or ſecure the poor pageant peace of mind or permanent happineſs? An exalted ſtation is but a ſplendid kind of miſery,—exclaims the Philoſopher,—the pomp of greatneſs a painful pre-eminence! It will require no depth of ſagacity to convince a reaſonable being, as man is, that theſe exclamations are founded on experience. For what can titles, or even high birth beſtow? A little homage, which for the generality is nothing more than a formal compliment, paid either out of cuſtom, or by conſtraint: or in return, perhaps, for favours beſtowed on the unworthy. But let us ſuppoſe for once, that this homage is ſincerely paid, what real good is conveyed to the man even in that caſe? Conſult the book of wiſdom, and you will find an anſwer—ALL IS VANITY!—nay, worſe than vanity, for the very

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ſuffering ſervile adulation has a manifeſt tendency towards the increaſe of pride, and by conſequence, inſtead of making men happy, will only hurt, and bring them into troubles and misfortunes. For the prouder any man is, the more imperious and ſlighting will he be to others who are his equals; the more apt will he be to oppreſs and contemn thoſe whom he imagines to be his inferiors, peradventure whom, in the naughtineſs of his heart, he deems not of the ſame day's make of providence with himſelf. This is certain, that nothing more naturally creates a general averſion than ſupercilious behaviour, and a lordly deportment; nothing diſguſts ſo ſoon, nothing makes men leſs ready and willing to pay reſpect, even where it is due. In ſhort, the only laudable ambition is to be wiſe, and the greateſt wiſdom is to be good. We may innocently be as ambitious as we pleaſe, ſo we aſpire to the beſt things. No propoſition can be more demonſtrable than that worldly glory ends with the world; and for what concerns us the world ends with our lives. What have we to be proud of? Are not all things periſhable? The time of flouriſhing pride is ſoon over, and our little greatneſs is loſt in eternity. Add to this, a general obſervation, that there are very few more conſpicuouſly unhappy than the proud and ambitious, unleſs it be another ſpecies of men; namely, thoſe who truſt in hoarded wealth, and take their conſequence from ill acquired poſſeſſions, whoſe immenſe treaſures are the only Gods they love or worſhip. For avarice and ambition are the two elements that enter into the compoſition of all crimes. Ambition is boundleſs, and avarice inſatiable. Will it then be a uſeleſs digreſſion to offer the MISER a few tranſient conſiderations?

How paſſionately ſoever blinded mortals may ſet their hearts upon riches, and perſuade themſelves that ſuch and ſuch an eſtate, when once in their poſſeſſion, would anſwer their utmoſt wiſhes, and make them compleatly contented; though they may entertain ſuch notions at a diſtance, yet when they come to the trial, it will prove

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juſt the reverſe, and inſtead of affording them any ſubſtantial ſatisfaction, will fill them with numberleſs troubles and perplexities, and deprive them of all that peace and tranquility of mind, which they falſely imagined would ariſe from thoſe eſtates when once procured. Beſides this fatal diſappointment, it is ſtill to be obſerved, that there are many deſtructive vices, that for the moſt part accompany an ample fortune, and thoſe impious and infamous courſes that are too often taken in order to raiſe it.

" So evident is the baſeneſs of temporal acquirements, and the " miſchiefs they occaſion in human life ſo apparent, that many phi- " loſophers, without the light of faith, or doctrine of the ſon of " God, were not ignorant of ſo glaring a truth ; and many ſo deeply " apprehended the importance, not only of contemning, but re- " nouncing of riches, that they lived moſt contentedly in great " poverty and moderation. ARISTIDES, though a principal per- " ſon in Athens, was ſo affected to poverty, that he always went in " a coarſe, ragged garment, hungry and neceſſitated ; and though " he had a wealthy friend named CLINIAS, could never be per- " ſuaded to accept the leaſt relief from him. It happened that " this CLINIAS being accuſed before the judges, to aggravate his " other crimes, it was alledged againſt him, that being rich and " able, he had not aſſiſted his friend ARISTIDES. CLINIAS per- " ceiving the judges to be highly incenſed, and the people in ge- " neral loudly exclaiming againſt his inhumanity, requeſted that " his friend ARISTIDES might be ſent for to defend him from that " falſe calumny, and to ſatisfy the judges and people, how fre- " quently, and with what zeal he had offered his wealth and for- " tunes to the exigencies of his friend, who perſiſted in his rejection " and refuſal. ARISTIDES appeared, and informed the judges of " the innocence of CLINIAS, and that it was his own deſire, ra- " ther to live in poverty, than brave it with the riches of another ; " ſaying withal, that rich men, who miſpent their fortunes, were

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" every where to be found—but few who paſſed their poverty and " want of neceſſaries with a firm and generous mind. No ſooner was " this declaration made, than the judges and people with one voice " exclaimed—the penury of ARISTIDES is infinitely more honour- " able than the opulence of CLINIAS." In concluſion, to hope for any ſubſtantial happineſs ariſing from ought this world can afford, is a very ſerious, if not a fatal miſtake; and our love muſt be ſtrangely miſplaced, when fixed upon ſuch unworthy objects as will never anſwer our expectations.

But then it may be ſaid,—muſt pleaſure to which the Almighty hath adapted our nature;—to which our creator has given us very ſtrong propenſions;—muſt honour and eſteem, which are the juſt rewards of virtue;—muſt grandeur and riches, which are both highly neceſſary, the former to public rule and authority,—the latter to acts of benevolence both public and private;—muſt we have no value or regard at all for theſe good things, which, when made the proper uſe of, are ſuch ſingular bleſſings, and for no other reaſon than becauſe they are too frequently abuſed?—We do not,—we cannot—ſay ſo, neither does our moſt holy religion require this at our hands. It is the inordinate love of theſe worldly acquiſitions, which the prophets and wiſe men of old, which our gracious Redeemer and his holy Apoſtles ſo ſtrenuouſly prohibit. We are forbid to ſet our hearts upon them;—we are forbid to employ our conſtant thoughts, and our moſt earneſt endeavours in the purſuit of them; we are forbid to reſt in the enjoyment of them as things that will make us truly happy. And the reaſon is, becauſe then they will become the bane and utter deſtruction of our real felicity. For he who loves the world, proſtitutes this noble paſſion in a very unworthy manner, to ſuch ends as are quite contrary to thoſe for which it was intended. For our love of any worldly good is no farther allowable, than whilſt it keeps within thoſe bounds which wiſdom warrants, and our religion has preſcribed. Thus pleaſures ought to be indulged no farther

farther than as tranſient refreſhments of nature, in order to enable us the better to ſerve our Maker, to anſwer the ends of our creation, and perform his will with the greater alacrity and delight.

Thus pomp and grandeur are by no means to be coveted as gratifications of our pride and ambition; or valued on any other account than that thereby we may be better qualified to imitate our grand exemplar in doing good. But when either pleaſures, grandeur, or wealth, begin to alienate our affections from God, and make us vain and ſelf-conceited; when they prompt us to look down with an eye of contempt upon our equals or inferiors, or to indulge our inordinate paſſions without controul; when we once perceive that they have the leaſt bad effect or influence over us, it becomes our duty immediately to check and reſtrain them; nay, we muſt reſolve to withdraw our affections totally from them; for otherwiſe they will inevitably prove our ruin and deſtruction. We have inſiſted the longer on theſe particulars, in order to make it appear, that there is nothing here below; no enjoyments that this world can afford us, that are juſt objects of our love and eſteem. For love requires a good, that is not only truly excellent, but ſolid and laſting; a good that will make us ſtill the happier, the more perfectly we enjoy it: ſuch a good as this would be an ineſtimable treaſure indeed; but alas! where is ſuch a good to be found? Is there nothing whereon our ſouls may venture to confide? Nothing ſufficient to ſatisfy our inſatiable thirſt after happineſs? Something, doubtleſs, there muſt be, that is capable of filling all the capacities of our ſouls; ſomething that will anſwer our ampleſt deſires; for otherwiſe thoſe capacities were given us to no purpoſe; and thoſe deſires to a very bad one, namely, to torture and torment us.

Since, then, our own experience as well as that of all the world, aſſures us, that no created good can poſſibly make us happy; and conſequently can have merit ſufficient to claim our love and affections; we muſt, of neceſſity have recourſe to the great creator of

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all things, who is the ſupreme good, the fountain of all being and perfection. And the reaſon is very obvious; becauſe he never can diſappoint the moſt extenſive deſires and expectations of the ſoul; but can fully and effectually ſatisfy them, and that for ever and ever. And accordingly the Father of all mercies, and his ever-bleſſed Son, our moſt compaſſionate Saviour and Redeemer, have both of them been pleaſed, out of their infinite goodneſs and condeſcenſion, to direct us in this our comfortleſs and bewildered ſtate; and ſhew us, the ſure and certain path to that happineſs, which, without ſuch divine aid and aſſiſtance, we ſhould ſeek to no manner of purpoſe; and that is, by laying down the poſitive and expreſs rule in our text for our conſtant obſervance; to love God above all things, even "with all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all our "mind, and with all our ſtrength."

That God is, indeed, our ſovereign good, and the ſupreme object of our love and affection, if we are but in the leaſt attentive to our own intereſt, will manifeſtly appear, if we will but conſider in the firſt place, how infinitely lovely that divine Being is in himſelf; and in the next, how infinitely good and gracious he is to the whole race of mankind.

He muſt of neceſſity be infinitely lovely in himſelf, becauſe it is he that gave being to every created object that is lovely; and conſequently, he muſt have all thoſe excellencies in the higheſt degree of perfection, in his own nature, which his divine goodneſs has communicated in ſuch an abundant meaſure, ſuch an infinite variety, and ſuch an amiable ſweetneſs to his creatures.—And how indulgent, how good and kind he is to us, beyond all expreſſion, will as manifeſtly appear, if we but conſider what an excellent nature he hath been pleaſed to confer upon us; what ample proviſion he hath made for our preſent happineſs, and with what tenderneſs his good providence continually watches over us; but above all, if we will but conſider in what a ſtupendous manner he hath

contrived to make us for ever happy and glorious with himſelf, when this life ſhall be ended.

Now what can poſſibly ſtand in competition with this divine beneficence? How invincibly does it command our moſt ardent affections? What ungrateful creatures ſhould we demonſtrate ourſelves to be, did we not love him infinitely above all things, who is ſo tranſcendently excellent in himſelf, and the ever bleſſed ſource and fountain of all thoſe numberleſs bleſſings, which from time to time he vouchſafes to confer upon us? For who can poſſibly be prevailed on not to love an object ſo amiable and lovely? By a ſecret impulſe it attracts our affections towards it; it irreſiſtibly ſubdues our ſtubborn hearts, and leads them in an holy triumph. Is it not, therefore, a matter of aſtoniſhment, that any creatures endued with the leaſt degree of thought, ſhould ever be tempted to neglect, much leſs to forget him, in whom, not only they themſelves, but the whole creation live, move, and have their being.

This is nothing leſs than abſolute perverſeneſs and wilful blindneſs, in order that we may with the greater freedom purſue and enjoy ſome other beauties in which we take a ſuperior delight: and he that will not contemplate with the utmoſt pleaſure on this infinitely glorious and moſt amiable object, muſt never ſay that he cannot, but that, notwithſtanding all his attractions, he peremptorily will not love him.

How is it poſſible, however, that we, who continually converſe with ſuch a variety of delightful objects, and at the ſame time firmly believe, that this beauteous world was formed by an all-wiſe and all-powerful Creator, ſhould ſet our affections on any thing leſs excellent than himſelf? How is it poſſible for us not to fix our thoughts on God, who is the ſupreme good, and the fountain of all bounty?

There is nothing that appears excellent and lovely, either to our ſenſe or underſtanding, but what actually is, and exiſts in the Almighty

mighty in its utmoſt perfection. The beauty of colours, the harmony of ſounds, the exact ſymmetry of parts, the ſoft and ſweet lineaments and features of the face, the ſurprizing force and power of ſome creatures, the luſtre and glory of others, the profound knowledge of ſome men, and the exemplary holineſs of others; all this, and all that can boaſt of any excellency is derived from him, whoſe power, wiſdom, and holineſs, are infinite, unſearchable, and unbounded. A being of ſuch perfection muſt be the object of love in the ſuperlative degree; that is, in ſuch a manner as that no ſublunary enjoyments, however alluring, ſhall withdraw our affections in the leaſt from ſuch tranſcendant goodneſs.

The LOVING GOD is ſo eſſential an article of duty, that we cannot poſſibly fix and eſtabliſh our eternal felicity on him, without it. For unleſs we love God above all things, without any exception, there is ſomething elſe that we muſt love with a greater affection than we do him; and that ſomething ſo beloved, be it what it will, is that in which we place our principal happineſs. It is greatly to be feared, however, that the many, or the greater part of mankind, prefer all things, that is, all temporal enjoyments much before him. For we are to form a judgment of a man's love and eſteem by thoſe pleaſures which he moſt induſtriouſly purſues, moſt eagerly deſires, and in which he takes a more than common delight. And it is altogether impoſſible, that there ſhould be ſo great a veneration and eſteem for God as is juſtly due to him, where the ſtream of our affections, and the whole tenor of our actions take a different channel, and run into another courſe: we mean, where the affections are ſet upon the pomps and vanities of a deceitful world, which, if any man loves, that is, ſets his whole heart upon, the Apoſtle aſſures us, that the love of the father is not in him. This poſitive aſſertion, however, it is to be hoped, will admit of ſome reſtriction, and is not to be interpreted in its utmoſt rigour. Some degree of love and affection for the things of this world, muſt, doubtleſs, be in-

dulged us; ſince otherwiſe, how can we be thankful to the Almighty as we ought, for the manifold bleſſings and comforts which we daily enjoy? And it is our bounden duty, beyond all diſpute, to pay him our moſt grateful acknowledgments for the leaſt of his mercies. And all perſons, who have any adequate idea of the ſupreme Being, readily grant, that his divine perfections are infinitely above all things that the world can boaſt of; and for that reaſon ſeem at leaſt to have a veneration and eſteem for him above all earthly things.

Here, however, we muſt diſtinguiſh between an ideal and a practical regard. For the former implies no more than a mere conviction that the deity, or the divine nature, muſt infinitely exceed all the beauties and excellencies that are to be met with collectively in, or ſcattered and diſperſed amongſt any finite creatures, however poliſhed or prepared by art or nature. The practical value or eſteem, however, which we have for God, may be thus denoted.—When our love and affection for him is, in every reſpect, proportioned to the high and awful ideas which our imaginations entertain concerning him; when we adore him on account of his infinite perfections; when we take delight in the contemplation of all his divine attributes; when we make it our whole ſtudy and employment to do every thing we undertake with an eye to his honour and glory, and with the hope of rendering our weak and imperfect ſervices acceptable in his ſight; when we carefully avoid doing every thing that we imagine may in the leaſt offend him; when we believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and embrace his goſpel diſpenſation; when, in ſhort, we put our whole truſt and confidence in him; and chearfully and implicitly ſubmit ourſelves, and all our affairs in this world, to his over-ruling providence, and unerring conduct, in hopes that we may become partakers of everlaſting felicity, when time ſhall be no more. When we deport ourſelves in this cautious manner, we then manifeſtly teſtify, that we love God above all things—that we

love

love him with ſincerity of heart. But alas! where is this ſincerity of heart, this true love and affection to be met with? It is certainly no difficult matter to work up our paſſions; to appear more devout than ordinary; nay, further,—to throw ourſelves into enthuſiaſtic tranſports;—but this is all miſguided love, and frantic zeal, and ſuch rapturous expreſſions of our inclinations to ſerve God, cannot but be highly diſpleaſing to an infinitely pure Being, as they too manifeſtly ſavour of hypocriſy and grimace, which we are repeatedly aſſured in ſacred ſcripture his ſoul abhors. In ſhort, it is then, and then only, that we teſtify our ſincere affection to God, when we take all imaginable care to keep his commandments. Were we to teſtify our loyalty and zeal for a temporal prince, it would not be our buſineſs, or at leaſt it ought not, formally to ſtand in admiration of every action, and to omit no opportunity of procuring his ſmiles by ſervile flatteries: on the contrary, the impartial patriot, and the truly loyal ſubject will punctually obſerve all his inſtructions, obey his commands, and act in ſuch a manner as he ſincerely imagines will render his ſervices of the moſt importance.

Now, notwithſtanding to love the Lord with all that ſincerity of heart, as is above expreſſed, is a very arduous taſk to all ſuch as ſet their affections on things below, and entertain any ardent deſire, or anxious aſpirations after the pomps and vanities of a wicked world; yet without that unaffected piety, and purity of holineſs, ſo frequently recommended by our bleſſed Lord and his Apoſtles, we are in a dangerous ſtate, and can have no ſure and certain grounds to hope for ſalvation.

Though to love God above all things is ſo arduous a taſk to all thoſe who are worldly-minded, and though there be no taking one ſure ſtep towards heaven without it; yet all men, whether holy or unholy, muſt acknowledge, that it is a duty highly juſt and reaſonable, and an act of gratitude only in them to love and adore the living and true God. For if we will but ſeriouſly reflect on the divine nature,

we

we ſhall be compelled to confeſs, that is God an all-wiſe, all-merciful, all-powerful, and an infinitely perfect Being; and by conſequence, that he is the moſt amiable object, and that no other, how deſirable or beautiful ſoever, can ſtand in any competition with him; and if ſo, whither ſhould the moſt natural ſtream of our affection flow, but directly towards him? What can we poſſibly meet with in this deceitful world, however alluring, that can bear the leaſt proportion to that infinite goodneſs and loving kindneſs which he ſhews to the whole race of mankind? From hence then the wide difference that there is between our reaſon and our affection is too manifeſt. We, in reality, believe, that God very juſtly deſerves our ſincereſt veneration and eſteem; and that no worldly object can lay claim to our love above all things; and yet how ſmall a ſhare, alas! has God in reality of that high value and regard? We doat upon our ſins, and the gratification of our inordinate and unruly paſſions, though we pretend to renounce them, and look down upon them with an eye of contempt: and we deſpiſe, in reality, too much, that, which with our tongues we profeſs to love above all things; that is to ſay, the ſupreme Being, and the ſalvation of our precious and immortal ſouls. O miſerable condition of humanity! formed to be happy, and yet fond of being miſerable! doating on what is vain and trivial, and yet contemning vanity! hating that which is good, and yet, allowing nothing to be comparable to that good; which by conſequence ſhould be the ſole object of our love and choice.

To love God above all things is ſo very juſt and reaſonable, that even thoſe who teſtify the leaſt affection for him, cannot but approve of thoſe who buſily employ their mind on that which is moſt excellent in its nature: and thoſe who love him above all things in the ſincerity of their hearts, are conſcious to themſelves that their love falls infinitely ſhort of that high veneration which ſo gracious and good a Being deſerves. The greater knowledge we have of God, and his

his divine perfections, the greater ought our love to be towards him, and our delight in his ſervice. And notwithſtanding the difficulty that attends this ſincere love and affection for the deity; yet we are compelled to acknowledge that no duty can be more reaſonable, ſince without him nothing can ever make us happy: and he alone not only can, but moſt aſſuredly will, provided we are ſincere on our parts, make us everlaſtingly happy in a future ſtate.

To conclude: ſeeing theſe things are ſo, how inexcuſable ſhall we, my brethren, be, if we ſuffer leſs perfect beings, and inferior benefactors to engroſs our affections, and take up all our thoughts! how ſhamefully baſe and ungrateful ſhall we be to neglect him who is our moſt bountiful patron; who enables all the other friends we have to do us good; and of the fullneſs of whoſe glory and excellence every thing that we love and admire beſides him is but a faint ray and languid reflection! God is the ſource and fountain of all perfection; and our ſovereign good; and by conſequence is, or at leaſt ought to be, the principal object of our love and affection. In a word; conſult your own feelings,—ought not our love to be ſet on things above, and not on any thing here below? And ought we not, with the utmoſt chearfulneſs and ſubmiſſion, to obey this firſt commandment of our bleſſed Saviour in our text, and love the Lord our God with "all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all "our ſtrength?" and to perform with equal chearfulneſs that other duty thereto annexed by our benevolent Lord, namely, this; "thou "ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf." Now, ſeeing there are no commandments greater than theſe two, and ſince whole burnt-offerings and ſacrifices are not ſo acceptable in the ſight of the Almighty, as the due obſervance of his moſt holy precepts, let all of us here preſent, under a due ſenſe of the imperfections of our very beſt ſervices, join in prayer, and ſay,

"We know, O Lord, and do with all humility acknowledge our-"ſelves to be objects altogether unworthy of thy love; but ſure we

"are

" are, that thou art an object worthy in every reſpect of ours. We
" are not perfect enough to ſerve thee, but thou haſt an indiſputable
" right to the beſt ſervices we can poſſibly render thee.—Do thou
" then, O gracious God, who haſt prepared for them that love thee,
" ſuch good things as paſs man's underſtanding, pour into our
" hearts ſuch love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all
" things, may obtain thy promiſes, which exceed all that we can
" deſire, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY XLIII.

A Stricture on the Land of Luxury.

ISAIAH, II. 7. 8.

THEIR LAND ALSO IS FULL OF SILVER AND GOLD, NEITHER IS THERE ANY END OF THEIR TREASURES; THEIR LAND IS ALSO FULL OF HORSES, NEITHER IS THERE ANY END OF THEIR CHARIOTS; THEIR LAND ALSO IS FULL OF IDOLS.

IN the chapter from which I have ſelected theſe words, is contained a lively picture of a nation, ſoftened into luxury, and immerſed in the love of pleaſures, which is immediately followed by the prophetical denunciation of divine vengeance, delivered in ſuch plain and explicit terms as to render them incapable of a miſconſtruction, and calculated not only to awaken the attention of that particular age and people, to whom they were addreſſed, but to ſerve likewiſe as friendly monitors to every ſucceeding generation, that ſhould diſcover any attachment or propenſity to the ſame vices.

The continued ſeries of favours that were ſhowered down by the hand of providence, on the poſterity of Abraham, is well known to all who are in the leaſt converſant with the ſacred pages; as by a mighty hand and a ſtretched-out arm, they were delivered from their Egyptian bondage, ſo by the ſame, after they had been miraculouſly ſuſtained for forty years in the wilderneſs, where they aſſiſted to diſ-

poſſeſs the accurſed nations of their territories, and enabled to drive them out; it is the grateful acknowledgment of one of their own prophets, "they got not the land in poſſeſſion through their own "ſword, neither was it their own arm that helped them;" when, therefore, in proceſs of time their Almighty deliverer had given them reſt from all their enemies round about, and had ſecured them a firm and peaceable eſtabliſhment in the promiſed land, it was then certainly a proper ſeaſon to have ſhewn the ſenſe they retained of ſuch numerous and weighty obligations, gratitude and obedience were the ſmalleſt tribute they could pay, in return for ſuch ſignal mercies; yet how far theſe virtues were from being their national characteriſtics is abundantly teſtified by the authentic records of ſacred hiſtory, and the complaints of God himſelf, as delivered by his prophets. Addicted to the love of novelty, they were for ever found mingling with the heathens, and learning their works. The natural conſequence of which was, that they were no longer zealous, either for the moral or ceremonial law, but acquired a taſte for the exceſſes and luxury of their eaſtern neighbours, and corrupted the purity of their religion by the groſſeſt practices of pagan idolatry. It was of theſe that the prophets ſeemed particularly commiſſioned to complain, as the fertile ſources of thoſe iniquities with which their nation was overſpread. It was on theſe they denounced the heavieſt vengeance of an offended God.

Seeing then that we have ſuch abundant teſtimony to prove how odious theſe vices are in the eye of heaven, and how certainly they have effected the ruin of every ſtate where they have been ſuffered to prevail, can it be thought a miſapplication of our time to enquire into the intimate connection that ſubſiſts between them, and to ſearch for remedies to oppoſe their growth and progreſs.

We may, I doubt not, at firſt view, be apt to imagine, that one part of the complaint urged by the prophet againſt the Jews, how proper ſoever it might be, with reſpect to them, can be by no means

means applicable to ourſelves, reclaimed not only from the impurities of pagan worſhip, but even from thoſe errors which have been engrafted on it in the Chriſtian church, we can readily acquit ourſelves of the imputation of idolatry. If by the term is meant merely the adoration of falſe and imaginary deities, viſibly repreſented under various and monſtruous forms, we are not indeed liable to the charge, but if we apply it figuratively, as we fairly may, to a blind devotion paid to the God of this world, to an unwarrantable and immoral attachment to its pleaſures, intereſts, and profits, are we not then idolaters in the ſtricteſt acceptation of the word?

That we cannot ſerve two maſters, the number of proſelytes that are daily made to ſcepticiſm and infidelity, are melancholy proofs, and to what cauſe can we aſcribe this fatal apoſtacy, but to the prevailing paſſion for pleaſure and diſſipation? the mind that is continually intent on finding out new ſchemes of amuſement, can receive but little ſatisfaction from the performances of religious duties; habituated, as it were, to a perpetual ſtate of agitation and alarm, it hurries from one object to another, and vainly ſeeks for happineſs amidſt the airy phantoms of deceit. Theſe, it muſt be acknowledged, are at leaſt as viſionary as they are alluring. Experience has ever proved them, not only the genuine ſources of diſappointment, ſatiety, and diſguſt, but incapable of imparting one ray of rational comfort or ſatisfaction to the ſoul; ſurely then that ſoul muſt be greatly inattentive to its value and importance, and ſcarcely conſcious of its immortality, while it is thus meanly ſolicitous to ſupply the body with ſenſual gratifications. I mean not at preſent, thoſe that are in the higheſt degree pernicious and deſtructive, but ſuch as from a falſe opinion of their innocence, or indifference, receive the ſanction of a more general encouragement—the exceſſes of ſuperfluous ornament, and the unavailing vanities of worldly ſplendor. Objects like theſe as they are diſqualified from improving our better part, as they can neither ſatisfy its deſires, nor promote its true in-

tereſts, are therefore unworthy its attention and purſuit, they will not diſpoſe us to liſten to the dictates of virtue, or to ſubmit to the influences of religion; the ſacred writers have emphatically ſtiled them the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life, and they are well calculated to cheriſh in the ſoul the ſeeds of both. Unaſſiſted reaſon will readily acknowledge this aſſertion to be true, what poor preparatives then muſt they be for the ſolemn ſcenes of devotion, where all ſhould be humility and lowlineſs of mind, where the thoughts and intentions of the heart are ſubmitted to the immediate inſpection of omniſcience; and where the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit is of infinitely greater value than all the elegance of external decoration. It is not indeed often, that we are to look for this laſt accompliſhment in the houſe of God, nor for thoſe perſons who excell in it, becauſe it is generally obſerved, that their devotions are of a different kind; they are too attentive to the enchanting ſounds of pleaſure, to liſten to that voice that would awaken them to reflection and repentance: but let us ſuppoſe, that notwithſtanding the variety and number of their engagements, they are ſo provident of their time as to allot a certain portion of it to the public duties of religion; let us even ſupppoſe—without enquiring too ſtrictly into the motives—that their attendance is tolerably regular, and their behaviour decent; they are not, therefore to value themſelves on the performance of their duty, nor haſtily conclude they have done all that Chriſtianity requires. If it is the earneſt deſire of their hearts to be the followers of Jeſus Chriſt, it muſt influence every action, and be conſpicuous in all their deportment. It is an uniform habit of piety and virtue, that muſt compleat the character of a true diſciple, and the conſtant fervency of private prayer, that muſt give an intrinſic worth to theſe external compliances. But is an habit of piety and virtue, compatible with a life of luxury and exceſs, or is it poſſible by the moſt exquiſite refinements of art, to reconcile ſuch glaring inconſiſtencies? Can we, by indulging the

pleaſures

pleaſures of ſenſe, acquire a reliſh for thoſe which are pure and intellectual? And when we return from the ſcenes of gaiety and confuſion, are our minds in a proper ſtate to acquaint themſelves with God, and be at peace? For an anſwer to theſe queſtions, we may appeal to every man's conſcience and experience, they will tell him; that if he love the world, if he devote his time, his thoughts, his fortune, to gratify the pleaſures of ſenſe, if he appear the moſt conſtant and conſpicuous, in the circles of vanity, amidſt the ſons and daughters of diſſipation, the love of the father is not in him, his heart cannot be animated by a proper ſenſe of gratitude and obedience, to the fountain of all wiſdom as well as goodneſs; nor can his actions be influenced by any hope of future reward, or any fear of future puniſhment; and if this aſſertion be true with reſpect to individuals, it will be found of equal validity in the abſtract, and lead us to theſe general concluſions; that luxury of every kind, may be termed, as juſtly as covetouſneſs a ſpecies of idolatry; and that the increaſe of them in any ſtate, muſt ever be conſidered as the decreaſe of piety and true religion; and as theſe comprehend in them, the whole circle of moral and relative duties, the progreſs of the vices in queſtion, muſt neceſſarily have the moſt fatal influence on the intereſts of ſociety.

On a baſis of vanity and pride, can we ever hope to raiſe a ſuperſtructure of charity and benevolence? Will not they rather ſteel our hearts, againſt the tender ſenſations of humanity? will they not avert our eyes from ſcenes of miſery, and ſtop our ears to the clamours of diſtreſs? That theſe are no more than their genuine effects, we cannot heſitate to determine, from the lively portrait our Saviour himſelf has given us of a man, in whom they were predominant, a man, who in poſſeſſion of the bleſſings of opulence, was meanly ſolicitous that they ſhould all center in himſelf, he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and probably employed a very unjuſtifiable portion both of his time and fortune, in adorning of his

perſon;

perſon: he fared ſumptuouſly every day, and debarred himſelf of no ſenſual gratification, that his wealth could procure him; he conſumed his days in vanity, and his nights in pleaſures, but amidſt them all he was a ſtranger to the pleaſure of doing good, he could ſuffer a fellow creature to ſue in vain for the crumbs which fell from his table, and leave him at his gate a wretched object of compaſſion.

This is a character, that muſt excite in every breaſt, not void of the tender ſympathies of human nature, ideas of horror and deteſtation: but let us aſk thoſe who are high-minded, lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God, whether it be unnatural? Let them ſeriouſly aſk themſelves, whether they would give up their treaſures, their ſilver, their gold, their horſes, their chariots—or even one ſuperfluous ornament, to beſtow it in the relief of miſery and diſtreſs? Are their feet as ſwift to find out the dwellings of the poor and the unfortunate, as to viſit the houſes of the affluent and luxurious—and can they prefer the heart-moving effuſions of gratitude to the empty adulations of an unmeaning croud? The former breathe forth the genuine tribute which is due to acts of humanity and benevolence, the latter are partial and inſignificant, and generally include a mixture of envy and ill nature; and yet the hope of receiving them, even blended with this baſe alloy, has encouraged a very dangerous ſpirit of emulation, the fear of being outvied in the unimportant article of ſuperficial decoration, is become to too many, a matter of ſerious uneaſineſs, and prompts them, by a laviſhneſs and profuſion, which neither prudence, nor honour, nor honeſty can defend, to labour to throw down every barrier of diſtinction.

Let us ſuppoſe this entirely effected, where would be the mighty triumphs of human vanity! "conſider the lilies of the field "they toil not neither do they ſpin, and yet Solomon in all his "glory was not arrayed like one of theſe;" Solomon the moſt magnifi-

magnificent, and perhaps, the moſt luxurious monarch of his time, —was not arrayed like a lilly of the field;—from a lilly of the field then we may learn, that the brighteſt cloathing of a chriſtian is humility, and that howſoever the faſhion of this world, might be an object of attention, to the poor unenlightned Gentile; from thoſe who look for better things, even new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs, nobler purſuits will be expected.

What a rational entertainment may Chriſtians always be ſure of finding, in the various paths of ſcience, and without an heart-felt complacency from the punctual diſcharge of their reſpective duties? —Let theſe but be diligently attended to, and conſcientiouſly performed, and how little of their time will not then be uſefully and profitably employed? They who are Chriſtians indeed, can neither have opportunities nor inclination, to enter deeply into the prevailing modes of diſſipation; they cannot wiſh to adorn themſelves with the ſplendid trappings of vanity, but as becometh perſons profeſſing godlineſs, with good works. It will be their ambition, that their whole deportment may be conformable, to the precepts of a religion, which is firſt pure, then peaceable; and they will continually preſs toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Chriſt Jeſus, influenced and animated by the aſſurance which the Apoſtle has given them, that they who ſow to the ſpirit ſhall of the ſpirit reap life everlaſting.

SUNDAY XLIV.

The Apoſtolical Caution.

EPHESIANS, V. 15.

SEE THEN THAT YE WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY, NOT AS FOOLS BUT AS WISE.

TO act agreeable to the dictates of reaſon, is to be apprized of the dignity of our nature, nor can we be ſaid, to be either ſenſible of its value, or grateful for the ineſtimable privileges it procures us, whenever we neglect to conſult it, or refuſe to be guided by its friendly admonitions; it was beſtowed on us by the author of every good gift, to aſſiſt and influence us in our reſearches after happineſs; to point out to us the obligation and amiableneſs of the whole circle of moral duties; to teach us not to oppoſe, but to ſubmit to the glorious light of revelation, which was graciouſly added to make us perfect in every good word and work.—Surely then it is a matter of juſt ſurprize and admiration, that we ſhould ſo frequently deviate from the paths which theſe unerring guides point out to us,—ſurely it is to be lamented, that what reaſon and religion conſpire to recommend, ſhould ſo ſeldom be the object of our choice, and that in theory alone we ſhould become advocates for virtue, while in practice we are found the partizans of vice.

That religion preſcribes duties very difficult to be performed; that it lays an unneceſſary reſtraint upon our actions, and is an ir-

reconcileable enemy both to intereſt and pleaſure, ſeems always to have been a prevailing opinion, and as ſuch implicitly adopted by every generation; nor can it be denied, that the apoſtolical injunction of walking circumſpectly, muſt needs be diſagreeable to thoſe who are impatient of controul, and unwilling to ſubmit to any thing but the dictates of their own licentious inclinations. But could we be induced by any arguments, to weigh it with the attention it deſerves, this friendly admonition, this important precept, could not fail of having a proper and uſeful influence, on our lives and conduct. When we conſider but a moment the frailty of human nature, and that variety of temptations which on every ſide ſurrounds us, we cannot but be ſenſible of the propriety, of the affectionate exhortation in the text.

If our firſt parents, though created in a ſtate of ſpotleſs innocence and purity, and poſſeſſed of an internal rectitude which their poſterity have been ſince deprived of, could be prevailed on to violate a ſingle prohibition; if they could break through the ties of gratitude and obedience, and put forth their hand to the fruit of that tree, of which God had ſaid ye ſhall not eat of it, neither ſhall ye touch it leſt ye die;—If they could not walk with ſufficient circumſpection in the garden of Eden, with but one temptation to ſeduce them, from their duty, with but one enemy to fear;—ſhall we, helpleſs and indigent as we are, preſume to advance boldly and ſecurely in the paths of life, unconſcious and inattentive whether our ſteps are conducting us to the manſions of eternal happineſs, or plunging us into the abyſs of everlaſting miſery! We wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places, and have therefore every rational inducement to be conſtantly on our guard, and to proportion our vigilance and circumſpection, to the power and malice of the enemies we are to contend with, and the greatneſs of the dangers we are to encounter.

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That theſe dangers are neither trifling nor contemptible, we need only to ſearch the ſcriptures to be ſufficiently apprized of, for our adverſary is there repreſented as a roaring lion, walking about, and with unremitting aſſiduity, ſeeking whom he may devour. Replete with ſubtilty and malice, he is ever indefatigable to ſeduce the innocent, and impoſe on the unwary;—his temptations are as various and abundant, as the tempers and inclinations of thoſe whom he ſtudies to deceive; and he has the peculiar addreſs, to introduce them to us in that garb which is the moſt likely to allure, and at that critical moment which is beſt calculated for ſucceſs. It is he who ſuggeſts to us the frailty of our nature, as a proper plea for diſobedience, and artfully makes that, which ought to be a motive for circumſpection, an argument for ſin; it is he who repreſents to us the duties of religion as difficult and irkſome, and that therefore a partial compliance with them, is all that can reaſonably be expected at our hands; it is he who attempts to convince us, that the ways of iniquity alone are ways of pleaſantneſs, and that we ſhall be inevitably diſappointed, if we expect to find that the paths of righteouſneſs are paths of peace.

Seeing then that theſe things are ſo, what manner of perſons ought we to be? Should the vigilance of our enemy incline us to indolence and inattention? And when he employs every ſtratagem for the deſtruction of our ſouls, ſhould we be leſs active for their preſervation? We cannot indeed but be ſenſible of the frailty of our nature;—we cannot but feel within ourſelves the law of our members warring againſt the law of our minds and bringing us into captivity to the law of ſin, but it is highly dangerous to preſume upon this plea for any wilful and deliberate violations of the law of righteouſneſs.

That gracious Being to whom we are accountable for all our tranſgreſſions, needs not that we ſhould remind him, of our weakneſs and inſufficiency, for he knoweth where we are made, he

remembereth that we are but duſt, and hath therefore in compaſſion to our infirmities, promiſed us the aſſiſtance of his holy ſpirit, to guide us into all truth, and not only to teach us what things we ought to do, but to give us grace alſo and power to fulfil them; yet it were unreaſonable to believe, that this efficacious aſſiſtance, which ſo greatly overbalances our favourite plea of frailty, is afforded indiſcriminately to all, and that they who, immerſed in indolence, content themſelves with fruitleſs and preſumptuous complaints, ſhare it in common with thoſe, who pray for it with all earneſtneſs and perſeverance. They, we may be aſſured both from reaſon and revelation, are the beſt entitled to it, who in obedience to the apoſtolical exhortation, endeavour to ſubdue thoſe ſins which do moſt eaſily beſet them, and whoſe ſerious aim it is, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation, to ſet bright examples of virtue, and to walk circumſpectly, not as fools but as wiſe.

The frailty of our nature, is indeed a powerful argument for prudence and precaution, and but a poor encouragement to ſin, and yet it is an excuſe which well deſerves to be obviated, becauſe we are always prepared to urge it in our juſtification, and that we may not ſeem to reſt our defence upon a ſingle plea, we have others to add to it equally ſpecious, and equally unavailing. How ready are we to complain of the violence of temptations, and the difficulty to withſtand them? And becauſe the tares are ſown in our hearts, by an enemy whoſe ſubtilty is equal to his malice, we therefore conclude it impoſſible to eradicate them, and inſtead of being animated to reſiſtance, and quitting ourſelves like men, we meanly ſink into a ſtate of ſervitude and deſpair.—Does it become us, thus tamely to reſign the liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free? And is it thus we maintain a good fight beneath the banner of the author and finiſher of our faith? If our enemy is powerful—we have ſtill the comfortable aſſurance that he is far from being invincible;—upon

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abject minds it is true, he is ever ready to encroach, but if we reſiſt him with the ſpirit that become us, he will flee from us; and tho' it is not in our power, to diminiſh his implacable malice, yet with reſpect to ourſelves, we ſhall in a great meaſure fruſtrate and defeat it, his attacks will become leſs violent, and leſs frequent, in proportion to the fortitude with which we withſtand them, and if we ſet a proper value, on that immortal part of us which he is inceſſantly labouring to deſtroy, if we can be wrought upon by the fears of eternal miſery, if we can be animated by the hopes of never ending felicity, we have every inducement to exert ourſelves in this ſpiritual warfare, as becometh the ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt, we have every encouragement, not to deſpair of victory, for tho' our own efforts can be at beſt but weak and feeble, yet the aſſiſtance that we are promiſed, is all powerful and irreſiſtable.—Need we to be reminded, that greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.

With regard to temptations,—that they attack us both in our amuſements and our buſineſs; that they follow us to our moſt ſecret retirements, and intrude upon us when we are engaged in the immediate duties of our religion, is an aſſertion too well founded, to be controverted or denied. Every man's experience, every man's conſcience muſt bear teſtimony, to this melancholy truth. But what then ought this to teach us?—We anſwer,—to walk circumſpectly—the important leſſon in the text. As we cannot but be conſcious, that we are conſtantly expoſed to temptations as they ſometimes are ſo ſudden, as almoſt to ſurprize us into a compliance, and at others ſo inſinuating as to ſeduce us into ſin, as they addreſs themſelves immediately to our prevailing paſſions, and aſſault us where we are the leaſt prepared for our defence; we have ſurely the ſtrongeſt reaſons to double our vigilance and precaution, giving all diligence to add to our faith and virtue.

The mammon of unrighteouſneſs it is true, will ſtill find a powerful advocate in an avaricious breaſt,—the bait of pleaſure will ſtill be alluring to a ſenſual appetite—the pageantry of worldly grandeur, will ſtill miſlead the purſuits of the ambitious,—but it is impoſſible to vindicate the conduct of thoſe who are thus miſled. We cannot plead that temptations are irreſiſtible, ſince the ſacred pages have furniſhed us with numerous examples, of thoſe who have overcome them;—whom neither pleaſures could allure from their duty, nor menaces diſmay, whom neither intereſt nor ambition could prevail on, to make ſhipwreck of their conſciences, nor to walk unworthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. Wherefore ſeeing that we are encompaſſed about with ſuch a cloud of witneſſes, let their glorious examples excite us to imitation, let us learn from them to walk circumſpectly, to guide our footſteps with diſcretion, and not run the riſque of forfeiting our eternal happineſs, by meanly ſubmitting to any temptations whatſoever; for what is a man profitted, if he ſhould gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?

To what has been already offered give me leave to add, that however well-calculated, the apoſtolical injunction of walking circumſpectly, might be for the primitive times of chriſtianity, it could ſcarce ever be inforced with greater propriety than in theſe.—The inſipid teacher was well aware, that many attempts would be made, to ſeduce his converts from the faith they had conſented to embrace, he foreſaw that the novelty of the religion which he taught would raiſe it many adverſaries,—its purity would create more,—and therefore his affection towards them, prompted him to put them upon their guard, and to remind them, that while they thought they ſtood ſtedfaſt, they ſhould take heed leſt they fall. But tho' by the gracious providence of God, the former of theſe reaſons is ſuperſeded by the firm eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in a great part of

of the world, the other it is to be feared, ſtill remains in its full force, the purity of our religion, is and ever has been,—to our ſhame be it ſpoken—a fatal bar to the practice of it. Yea!—even the moſt abandoned characters of former ages, ſeem to have preſerved ſome regard to external appearances; but to ſee chriſtianity put to an open ſhame, is a melancholy ſpectacle reſerved for our days. This is indeed an age of practical infidelity, when men are ſo little ſolicitous about the power of godlineſs, that they ſcarcely regard the form of it. Freedom of opinion in matters of religion, is now become more faſhionable than ever; every man hath a doctrine,—hath a tongue,—hath a revelation,—hath an interpretation for himſelf;—an excellent method for individuals to reconcile religion to their own favourite and prevailing paſſions. From a fountain thus corrupted how bitter muſt the waters neceſſarily flow? The fatal taint they have given to our moral conduct, is ſo obvious, that it cannot require to be much enlarged on. Sorry are we to ſay, that they who by their exalted ſtations, are placed as it were by providence, as lights in the world, ſeem to do every thing in their power to fruſtrate its gracious intentions, inſtead of recommending by their examples,—(as they ought)—whatſoever things are true, honeſt, juſt, pure, lovely, virtuous, and of good report; they are in general, the moſt profligate, the moſt abandoned;—as if they vainly imagined themſelves out of the reach of cenſure here, or puniſhment hereafter. The opinion of the world, they may indeed affect to diſregard, earthly tribunals, they may too frequently evade, yet muſt they one day appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, where neither wealth, titles or vanity can plead in their behalf.

In the mean time, as imitation is obvious and eaſy, let us, my brethren be attentive, that the fatal contagion ſeize not on ourſelves; let us remember, that tho' greatneſs may countenance vice, it cannot change its nature, it will ſtill continue to be deteſtable, it will be for ever odious in the ſight of God, it will draw down on our own heads,

heads, deſtruction, not only inevitable, but eternal. While on the other hand, a courſe of piety and virtue, opens to us the brighteſt ſcenes of happineſs and immortality. It hath not, it cannot enter into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him. Let not then our love wax cold becauſe iniquity abounds; the fatal prevalence of ill examples reminds us that we are now indiſpenſibly obliged to walk circumſpectly not as fools but as wiſe. In a word if we are not loſt to all ſenſe of our duty, we ſhall remember this apoſtolical caution—ſeeing that our intereſt, our reputation and our hopes of happineſs, all conſpire to ſolicit us, nay to demand of us, that our converſation be, as it becometh the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY XLV.

A Leſſon on Death.

ECCLESIASTES, XI. 3.

IN THE PLACE WHERE THE TREE FALLETH IT SHALL BE.

IT is ſcarce more certain that there is not in nature a more active principle than the mind of man,—than it is that this activity is too often thrown away upon trifles, while things of the greateſt moment paſs by unnoticed as not worthy his attention. To learn to live, which all things rightly conſidered, is of very little ſignification, calls forth all our faculties. In this ſcience every man is ambitious to become an adept; but to learn to die, which is actually a moſt neceſſary and important buſineſs, is a leſſon at which we are as dull and backward as a lazy ſchool-boy. Whether the frequency of the thing takes off our attention from it—or we ſtudiouſly avoid all reflections on it, till we really forget there is any ſuch thing—yet certain it is that few live as if they were to die, or at leaſt, as if death was to be attended with ſuch conſequences as a reanimation, judgment, and a juſt retribution for all their actions.

Reflections of this nature are not, it muſt be acknowledged, the moſt agreeable and entertaining companions at all times, and to all perſons. For a man in the vigour of youth, the bloom of health and ſtrength, to think what an amazing change he muſt undergo: that

the principles by which he ſubſiſts ſhall ceaſe to act, and every ſenſe be laid aſide; that beauty and wit ſhall be no more; a long and ſolemn ſilence chain up his tongue, and darkneſs veil his eyes; that the breath ſhall flee from his noſtrils, and he ſhall ſay to corruption, thou art my father! and to the worm, thou art my mother and my ſiſter! theſe are unwelcome intruders to a mind at eaſe. "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that "liveth at reſt in his poſſeſſions; unto the man that hath nothing "to vex him, and who hath proſperity in all things!" But alas, the irreverſible law hath paſſed upon all. The pale conqueror ſtrikes with an impartial hand at the palace and the cottage, and levels all diſtinction. In his domains, young and old, rich and poor, wiſdom and folly meet together; the grave is the receptacle of them all. Abraham is dead! the prophets are dead! one generation paſſeth away and is gone! another and another ſtill ariſeth, and forgetteth thoſe which are paſt.

Theſe ſuggeſtions may, if properly purſued, be improved to the greateſt advantage. From hence a man may learn, that this decay, of which, in ſpite of all his reluctance, he muſt be at laſt convinced, ſhall indeed be but partial; that he ſhall ſtill be capable of motion, viſion, pleaſure, and pain, though in a way very different from what he has yet experienced; and though, after his ſkin, worms deſtroy this body, yet there is ſomething lodged within it, which neither ſword nor fire can reach; over which corruption has no power, and which neither time nor death can impair.

Seeing that it is appointed unto all men, and to us amongſt the reſt, once to die; it may be worth our while to aſk ourſelves frequently and ſeriouſly this queſtion; what is death? Whether it be a circumſtance of that trifling and unimportant nature, as to warrant the little attention which is uſually paid to it; the little care the generality of mankind are apt to take to provide and prepare for it? Death may be conſidered as an eternal adieu to the world; but

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in this light it has very little title to our regard: were that all the higheſt degree of indifference and inattention would be far from being culpable. For if on the one hand we ſometimes enumerate a thouſand bleſſings to endear us to it;—honours,—power,—children,—friends;—ſee the ſun riſe for no other purpoſe but to embelliſh this earth—and the ſtores of nature exhauſted to render life agreeable; what a group of miſeries ſtand ready on the other to draw off our attachment, and make us very heartily tired of it: pain, poverty, contempt, the loſs of friends and children, the ingratitude of one, the villainy of another, the oppreſſor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the horrid ravages of luſt, avarice, and ambition, and the ſure approach of the evil days, when the ſilver cord ſhall be looſed, the golden bowl be broken, and we ſhall be conſtrained to ſay, we have no pleaſure in them: and yet, as acceptable as we might ſuppoſe the ſentence to be to the needy, and to him whoſe ſtrength faileth, who is now in the laſt age, and is vexed with all things; to him who deſpaireth, and hath loſt all patience, there is ſomething extremely ſolemn and awful in the tranſition. Nature ſhudders at the reflection; and we have need of all our philoſophy, all our reſolution to ſupport us in the encounter. But this is trifling: were there no more to be done in dying, than meerly to take leave of the world, he who could not do it with a good grace would not deſerve the name of man. Mean time it were wiſe to eat, and drink, and laugh, for to-morrow may be the day; to enjoy the good things that are preſent, and ſpeedily to uſe the creatures like as in youth; to fill ourſelves with coſtly wines and ointments, and let no flower of the ſpring paſs by us; to crown ourſelves with roſe-buds before they are withered, and every one take his part of voluptuouſneſs, and leave tokens of his joyfulneſs in every place. But alas! the ſcene is not ſo ſoon at an end. The ſame gate which opens to give us paſſage out of this world introduces us at the inſtant into another: a world extremely different from this in every reſpect; a world

where every ſenſation will be heightened ; every enjoyment a thouſand times more extatic ; every pang a thouſand times more excruciating ; where time and variety ſhall give place to conſtancy and eternity ; and where, after myriads of myriads of ages conſumed, the juſt ſhall be no more apprehenſive of falling from his happineſs, nor the wicked hope to ſee a period to his torments, than at the inſtant they firſt commenced: and what will become of us in that new world, when the faſhion of this is paſſed away, is certainly a matter well worth our conſideration. It is here that death becomes a ſerious affair. It is the moment that fixes all our future fortunes for ever ; irrevocably determines our lot, after which it will be impoſſible to take any method to reverſe it : impoſſible ; ſhould we never ſo much repent the choice we made, when all was at our option, ever to retract ; ever to alter it ; there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſins ; but a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation to the wicked : while the ſouls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there ſhall no torment touch them ; for whether the tree falls towards the ſouth, or towards the north! in a fortunate or unfortunate poſition ; toward that happy quarter where an eternal ſummer reigns ; or in the dark and dreary regions of deſpair and miſery ; in the place where the tree falleth there it ſhall be.

This is the ſenſe in which the beſt commentators underſtand the words. The other interpretations, for there are more than one, are forced and unnatural. The doctrine we build on them is not more certain than rational ; namely, that our continuance in this life is the laſt, the only opportunity we ſhall ever have of making good our title to everlaſting happineſs. When we die, our lot and ſtation in that future world into which we at the inſtant paſs, is irrevocably fixed. According to the actions done in the body ſhall we be judged, whether they have been good, or whether they have been bad ; and the wicked ſhall be conſigned to everlaſting puniſhment in the ſame moment that the righteous paſs into life eternal. That

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this is the poſitive, expreſs, and conſtant doctrine is ſo obvious, that it were almoſt impertinent to remark it. And even reaſon herſelf, though it be one of thoſe few queſtions which do not ſeem ſo properly to belong to her province, will yet inſtruct us in the ſame uſeful leſſon. A long and conſtant experience will inform us, that when we lie down in the ſilent grave, every inſtrument of offence will immediately forget its office; in a very little while loſe both its form and quality, and be reduced to its original duſt. The eye which was for ever gazing on vanity; the hand which was frequently uplifted in acts of violence, and the feet which were ſwift to ſhed blood will moulder together; nor will it be long diſcernible what particles of the inanimate duſt were thoſe which gave light to, what thoſe which ſupported, or which defended the body; and reaſon will ſubjoin, that when we are removed from the ſtage of this world, the faſhion of it will paſs away entirely, with regard to us, and every connection between that and us be diſſolved: there will be neither objects to incite, nor organs to adminiſter to our paſſions. The living know that they ſhall die, and how to improve that conviction is their great concern. But in that ſleep of death, the dead are ignorant of every method of retrieving the miſtakes of which they were guilty here. There is no field for juſtice; no opportunity of exerting that charity, humanity and temperance, which were here ſo often forgot. Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, are now periſhed; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the ſun. It is far from being impoſſible, that the ſoul, in that detached ſtate, will find itſelf very conſiderably improved in point of knowledge; will be ſatisfied of a thouſand truths, which, in her former ſtate of exiſtence, ſhe treated with ridicule and contempt: will ſee vice and virtue in their genuine and native lights; the former diveſted of that falſe and dazzling glare, which attracted ſo many miſtaken votaries; the latter diſencumbered of all her imaginary terrors. It is more than probable,

bable, that ſhe will be no longer a ſtranger to the things which concerned her peace; will ſee clearly what ſhe might, and ought to have done; that ſhe might have been entitled to an inheritance in everlaſting life: but all this knowledge being confined to theory, will avail her but little, if her title to the crown of life be not already made good by practice. And the racer might as well expect the prize, after the courſe was finiſhed, and the reward aſſigned to another, by aſſerting, that he was at length ſenſible, that his miſcarriage was the effect of his own folly, and that he was now acquainted with a method by which he could have enſured ſucceſs. Were it poſſible for us to retrieve, in another life, the falſe ſteps of which we have been guilty in this, all our actions, and even our exiſtence as men would be of very little moment or ſignification. Virtue would, in effect, have little to recommend, or vice to diſcountenance and diſcourage: there would be nearly one event to the righteous and to the wicked: and he who trifled away his time, and laboured not at all in the vineyard, might in the end be on a level with him who bore all the burthen and heat of the day. But why then is human happineſs frequently dealt out to the righteous with ſuch a ſparing and niggard hand; while the wicked come into no misfortune, but even riot in luxury and pleaſure? There needs not, in my opinion, a ſtronger proof that our conduct in this life is to determine our lot in that which is to come, than the conſtant experience, that if there be ſuch things as good and evil; if there be ſuch characters as virtuous and wicked men; ſo long as that laſts, it is very rarely that they meet with their reward: but were the ſame power of meriting or demeriting to continue in the ſame manner after death, where is the neceſſity of undergoing any ſuch change? Why ſhould we die at all; and not rather be caught up into the air at ſuch a time as God ſhould think fit to put an end to our trial; and be rewarded or puniſhed, according as we have deſerved? And after all, is there any thing ſo hard and unreaſonable, in this

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meaſure of providence, that we ought to complain of it? Have we not, from time to time, received ſufficient aſſurances that thus we ſhould be dealt with? Have we not been told, that in the night no man can work? That man lieth down, and riſeth not till the heavens be no more? That he ſhall not awake, nor be raiſed up out of his ſleep, till the days of his appointed time are over, and his change come? That his ſons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them? That, in the mean time, his tranſgreſſions are ſealed up in a bag, and that God ſeweth up his iniquity, in order to produce it againſt him? Have we not been informed, that they are the works of the fleſh, which are to exclude us from the kingdom of heaven? That we muſt all ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt; to the end that every man may receive the things done in his body, not in a ſtate of ſeparation from it, according to that he hath done, whether it have been good, or whether it have been bad? That the wretch whoſe hard and impenitent heart renders him contentious and diſobedient to the truth, is treaſuring up unto himſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? And that they who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, ſhall have for their reward eternal life? And has not our gracious Lord, in proportion to the talents which he has thought proper to entruſt to us, endowed us all with ſufficient knowledge and abilities to underſtand how we ought to manage and improve them, ſo as to render any other kind of trial; any other ſtate of probation abſolutely unneceſſary? What then have we to do, but to make a proper uſe of the time which is allotted us? That when our Lord ſhall come and reckon with us, we may not have occaſion to call for the mountains to fall on us, and the hills to cover us from his preſence.

As the day is the only time in which we can poſſibly work, let us firſt conſider the unhappy conſequence of ſuffering the darkneſs

to

to overtake us unawares, before we have finiſhed our taſk; or at a time, perhaps, when the miſchief we have done in the vineyard, may greatly over-balance the good: before we have prepared and trimmed our lamps to be ready to receive the bridegroom, leſt we be for ever excluded the bride-chamber, and aſſigned to perpetual darkneſs, where there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.

And as a farther incentive to our aſſiduity, let us remember of how precarious and uncertain duration is this day of life: how very ſhort at its utmoſt extent, and how liable to be reduced to a much narrower compaſs, by a thouſand unforeſeen and unavoidable accidents. Man who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down, he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth not. Behold! God hath made our days as an hand-breadth; and our age is as nothing before him; at how great a diſtance ſoever we can ſuppoſe it, yet the day muſt come, when, if we look back on the longeſt life, we ſhall find it but as yeſterday, ſeeing it will be paſſed, even as a watch in the night. The days of our age, we are told, are threeſcore years and ten: but ſuppoſe we could even be aſſured of counting three times that number, we ſhould find all of it little enough to prepare properly for our paſſage into the other world. But let us again conſider how very few, in proportion to the numbers which are born into the world, reach the third, fourth, or even fifth part of that age! by how many chances we are liable to be ſummoned away long before that period! what a number of miniſters death hath continually abroad! and what a variety of methods he has of performing his myſterious work! that the day of the Lord ſtealeth on us as a thief in the night; and in ſuch an hour as we leaſt expect him may our maſter return, ſurprize, and call us to account! we know not how ſoon the miniſters of fate may be let looſe upon us; and him that eſcapeth the ſtorm ſhall the peſtilence ſlay; and him that eſcapeth the peſtilence ſhall the famine ſlay. Already may the ſword be

whet

whet; the bow be bent; the arrow be prepared which is to ſever this ſlender and uncertain thread. This very moment may the blood begin to boil with that fever which may in a few days determine our fate, and fix us happy or miſerable for ever. In vain may we fancy ourſelves ſecure in youth, or health, or ſtrength, much leſs in wealth or honours. It is a ſummons which muſt be obeyed; and if the griſly meſſenger call us in the ſecond or the third, or even in the firſt watch, we muſt riſe and follow him. Seeing that we are ſubject to ſuch ſudden ſurpriſes; and that the conſequences of being taken unprepared may prove ſo fatal, how cautious and circumſpect ought we ever to be, that whenever our Lord ſhall break in upon us, he may find us engaged in ſuch employment as we ſhall not be aſhamed of, and working the work of him who ſent us. How greatly does it behove us to remember, that in the midſt of life we are in death! and as we know not the hour when the bridegroom cometh, to ſtand always with our lamps trimmed, and be ready to receive him at any time whatſoever.

Seriouſly and frequently to reflect on this important change, will be of very great uſe and advantage to us. It is next to impoſſible to think ſeriouſly on death, and not to reſolve to prepare for it. No man can remember what it is, and not cry out with Balaam; "let "me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his!" But then he muſt not forget that, in order to enable him to die that death, he muſt firſt live the life of the righteous; and that while he lives, he muſt live unto the Lord; if when he dies, he indeed deſires, that he may alſo die unto the Lord.

SUNDAY XLVI.

The Reſurrection of univerſal Mankind.

1 COR. XV. 22.

AS IN ADAM ALL DIE, EVEN SO IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE.

IT was one end of our bleſſed Saviour's reſurrection, and public appearance in the fleſh after his death, to confirm and eſtabliſh that eſſential and important article of his doctrine—THE RESURRECTION OF UNIVERSAL MANKIND—he himſelf reaſſuming his human form and body as a proof of the poſſibility of its re-union with the ſoul, and to convince his diſciples that it was not an impracticable, and therefore ought not to be held as an incredible thing, for God to raiſe the dead. This was in ſome meaſure a novel doctrine to every one. Until then the heathen world had ſcarce heard, or formed the leaſt conception of ſuch a thing. When St. Paul mentioned it at Athens, the ſeat of learning and philoſophy, ſome part of his audience looked upon him as a madman. Others miſtaking the word, fancied that he was attempting to ſet up ſome new god or goddeſs, and from the little ſucceſs his preaching had in that city, it ſhould ſeem that there were but few, whoſe thirſt after knowledge, or truth, or whoſe curioſity induced them to deſire a farther explanation of the ſubject. Even the Jews, though they were not wholly ſtrangers to the doctrine, had but confuſed and imperfect ideas of it. They ſaw it but through a glaſs,

darkly and obſcurely—were juſt enough acquainted with the thing to be prepared for receiving a more full and compleat diſcovery of it. Moſes ſhewed at the buſh, that the dead are raiſed ſo far as to eſtabliſh the notions of the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate.—But that this corruptible ſhould put on incorruption, and this mortal aſſume immortality—was a joyful meſſage reſerved to endear the miſſion of him, who was to be the ſeal of the prophets—and to ſhut up the book of the revelation of the will of God, that thence forward, neither man nor angel might add thereto. On this, therefore, as Chriſtians, it becomes us—as men it concerns us frequently and ſeriouſly to meditate—and ſurely there are a few points more worthy our meditation. Leſt by long inattention we ſhould unfortunately loſe ſight of it, and begin to think it a thing incredible that God ſhould raiſe the dead; we virtually every Lord's day commemorate the joyful elevation of the firſt-fruits: is it not natural then, as well as expedient, that we ſometimes turn our eyes to the harveſt? It is the happy privilege of thoſe whom God vouchſafes to inſtruct by the ordinary method of a written revelation, that they have a right to try and examine by that criterion which he hath given them, whether theſe things are ſo or not, whether thoſe perſons through whoſe hands the revelation paſſes, have conveyed it to us pure, genuine, and incorrupt; or whether our aſſent be required to impoſſibilities, abſurdities, and contradictions,—and it is certainly no inconſiderable evidence of the truth and excellency of the Chriſtian revelation, that it has no need to decline this ſcrutiny. Search your ſcriptures, ſaid our Lord to the Jews, and you will find in them ſufficient evidences that I do not attempt to impoſe upon you; that I do nothing but what is conformable to the declarations made in them.—And he might well have added, conſult the tacit ſcriptures of the mind, that ſilent revelation which was originally impreſſed on your ſouls by the finger of your Creator, and you will find

find I ſay nothing but what is conformable to her laws, and to which ſhe will not give a powerful and willing teſtimony.

To put this maxim upon proof, I ſhall venture to let revelation, for a while at leaſt, ſtand by as a ſilent ſpectator, and endeavour to prove that they who ſay there is no reſurrection, neither angel nor ſpirit, are as deaf to the voice of reaſon, as they are unacquainted with the ſcriptures, and inſenſible of the power of God.

The proper notion of a reſurrection is this: that it is a ſubſtantial change, by which that which once hath been, and which ſeemed to be loſt—by corruption,—for inſtance, is reſtored in all reſpects to its priſtine ſtate. With regard to man, it is where the ſame ſoul, and the ſame body, which were diſunited by death, are again united. Where nothing is wanting to conſtitute an identity of perſon, but where the ſame man is enabled to perform the ſame vital functions, as before his diſſolution.

It may be neceſſary to found our obſervations on the doctrine of a reſurrection, in trying the poſſibility of it:—to examine whether there be any invincible obſtacle in the way to obſtruct it, or whether we require you to hope and believe a thing which cannot be.

But if a reſurrection be impoſſible, it muſt be ſo, either with reſpect to the agent, or to the ſubject or patient, that is, either becauſe the conſtituent parts of the body are by death ſo effectually diſunited, that they are incapable of a rejunction—or elſe, that it is a work of ſo much difficulty, that there is not any being of wiſdom, power, and activity ſufficient to effect it.

But both are certainly falſe poſitions. For with reſpect to the ſubject, it is evident that man at his death returns at worſt but to the ſame principles from which he was firſt raiſed by creation, and if duſt were then capable of an union with the breath of life, why may it not once more, or oftener, if it ſhould pleaſe the divine architect oftener to ſeperate them? If it be aſked, where will that duſt be found? Certainly ſomewhere within the circuit of created nature

ture—for to ſuppoſe it abſolutely loſt—totally annihilated—is to ſuppoſe a miracle, at leaſt, as great as the impugners of a reſurrection will call that; and a taſk which calls upon the interpoſition of omnipotence full as loudly. For matter, though it have a perpetual tendency to alteration, hath yet no kind of propenſity to give up its exiſtence. A particle may traverſe all the four elements, but will be found in ſome of them. Expel it from the earth, the air is ready to receive it, and you may trace it through water, and even fire itſelf, back to earth again. Somewhere however it will be, and after a revolution of myriads of ages, poſſeſs the ſame capability of conſtituting the ſubſtance of an human body, as it was the firſt hour it was ſummoned into being, to be applied to that purpoſe. But from that ſomewhere, who ſhall recall, who ſhall ranſack the elements to recollect the ſcattered particles; when birds, beaſts, fiſhes, plants, ſhall be called upon to reſtore part of their borrowed eſſence? Is there a power equal to this taſk? Is there not? and has not that power already been exerted? We do not pretend to a ſpontaneous reſurrection, in conſequence of any inherent virtue or efficacy. We dare not ſay, deſtroy this temple, and in three days, or in three millions of ages, we will raiſe it again; but unleſs the arm of omnipotence be ſhortened, unleſs the virtue which gave being to a thouſand worlds, be extinct; unleſs God have ceaſed to be God: raiſed it may be, and raiſed it will be. That power which firſt breathed into our noſtrils the breath of life, to whom our ſpirit returns, when commanded to quit its priſon; is every way qualified to refit this diſordered machine, and to reſtore to it all its original vigor; all the principles which were wreſted from it by death, and became a prey to diſſolution. Nay, ſhould it even be neceſſary to confine the notion of a reſurrection to ſuch an abſolute kind of identity, that there ſhould not be the leaſt variation in any one of the conſtituent particles, though I do not apprehend that there is any ſuch neceſſity,—who ſhall aſſign a reaſon

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why any one of thoſe conſtituent particles ſhould ever be concealed from God any more than when we were made in ſecret and curiouſly wrought in the myſtic mould of creation? His eyes ſaw all our ſubſtance when it was yet imperfect, and in his book were all our members regiſtered and delineated, ere yet they had the leaſt exiſtence, or ſhadow of exiſtence, ſave in the divine will—Hell is open before him and deſtruction hath no covering. What is there that can hide us from ſuch an eye? Rocks, mountains, ſeas, the great abyſs, nay hell itſelf, is too ſhallow; nor can the moſt minute particle be loſt to him who hath numbered the very hairs of our head, and without whoſe obſervation not even one of them can fall to the ground.

Thus reaſon gives her ready ſuffrage to the poſſibility of a reſurrection, but that is not all we have to expect from her, nor will ſhe deſert us at the threſhold. She has obliged us to acknowledge that this may be: attend to her candidly and impartially but a little while longer, and ſhe will go near to perſuade you that it muſt be: ſhe is not content with poſſibilities, ſcarce even with probabilities,—ſuch degrees of probability at leaſt as do not amount very nearly to moral certainty and demonſtration, in ſpite of conſtant and continual proofs, in ſpite of the experience of very near ſix thouſand years, nay, in ſpite even of conviction itſelf. It is with difficulty that a man in the bloom of youth, the vigor of health and ſtrength, can prevail upon himſelf to believe he ſhall ever die; that his ſoul can ever be diſlodged from the ſordid tenement of which ſhe ſeems to have taken ſuch ſecure and firm poſſeſſion. It is a ſtrange circumſtance, but yet ſome how or other it is exceedingly true,—that as the poet expreſſes it,—"all men think all men mortal but themſelves." It ſhould ſeem as if theſe ſentiments were not impreſſed on us for nothing. Perhaps heaven means by theſe ſuggeſtions to inform us of, and familiariſe to us this ſolemn and important truth; that our imaginations will be one day realiſed, and that the tempo-

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rary ſeparation of the ſoul and body will be ſucceeded by a re-union, which ſhall never be diſſolved.

If we conſider the principles of which we conſiſt, we can ſcarce believe this life proportionable to our compoſition. God created man, entire man, to be immortal—the body was formed by the ſame wiſe hand as a companion for the immortal ſpirit. Now the longeſt of our lives is but ſhort, and inferior to that of ſeveral more ignoble creatures. There are many parts of the animal and vegetable creation, which are to return entirely to their duſt, which excel us in this reſpect. Have we then all thoſe apparent advantages which we enjoy over them for nothing? Shall theſe mortal, theſe material and unintelligent ſouls enjoy a privilege ſo much beyond us? or ſhall we not rather conclude, that becauſe the human ſoul is ſo often forced from the body untimely, always in a very ſhort ſpace, in proportion to ſome other creatures,—this is not the only life of man, and therefore the ſoul may at a ſhorter warning retire from the body, in order to re-aſſume it when it ſhall be rendered a more glorious and durable habitation.

As men we are free agents, capable of doing good or evil, and conſequently, of meriting reward or puniſhment. Now it is certain that we often go without either of theſe in this life, but it is not reaſonable we ſhould always eſcape, for if there be no reward for the righteous, no puniſhment for the wicked, we might well doubt whether there be a God who judgeth the earth. But there not only is not in this life very often any reward or puniſhment for us adequate to our deſerts, but frequently there can be none ſuch—for what earthly recompence for inſtance could compenſate for the pains and ſufferings of holy martyrs and pious confeſſors? What human puniſhment atone for the helliſh malice of thoſe by whom thoſe tortures were inflicted? How but by a reſurrection are they to be rewarded whoſe merit conſiſted principally in that very circumſtance which put them abſolutely beyond the reach of earthly retribu-

retribution? Where elſe are they to be puniſhed, whoſe ſtation ſecures them from human reſentment, or whom laws are too weak to reſtrain, or to correct? But every thing about us contributes to implant and to confirm in us theſe principles. Nature, through all her works, points out to us a reſurrection, and intimates eternity to man. How aptly is it figured in the ſeaſons! The very revolutions of light and darkneſs—day and night—declare it. We may read it in the very fruits of the earth—where corruption itſelf becomes the parent of reviveſcence, and every ſeed after a ſhort interval ariſeth again with its own peculiar body. We may read it even in the common articles of ſleeping and waking, were not theſe things ſo familiariſed to us by conſtant habit—it would ſcarce ſeem leſs improbable to us that we ſhould ever revive from our ordinary ſleep, in which the faculties are ſo locked up and buried, than from that more ſilent and ſolemn ſleep, from which nothing can awaken us but the voice of an archangel, and the awful ſound of the trumpet of God.

I have already in ſome meaſure obſerved, that if we conſider firſt the intent and end of the body's creation, which was to be a companion for the ſoul, we can hardly believe it was deſigned to be made ſo very little uſe of as we find it often is, or that it ſhould attend the ſoul through ſo ſhort a ſtage only as human life, leaving her to make the remainder of an infinite progreſs by herſelf. Then if we conſider how large a ſhare the body bears in theſe tranſactions, by which the future happy or miſerable being of man is to be determined, as on the one hand it were not reaſonable that the body ſhould be excluded from all ſhare in the reward due to a virtuous and well ſpent life;—ſo on the other it is not to be imagined that the ſoul ſhall be left to ſuſtain alone the fatal conſequences of thoſe follies in which ſhe had often, if not always, by much the leaſt concern. Nor is the probability of ſuch an event leſs clearly argued by the nature of our redemption, than by thoſe of our creation,—for

if the dead riſe not, then is the Chriſtian indeed of all men moſt miſerable. Then are all thoſe unhappy men who are fallen aſleep in Chriſt, with the flattering and deluſive hopes of a reſurrection—to which hopes they were content to ſacrifice every other enjoyment, every worldly conſideration—to which goal they were content to preſs through the fiery ordeal of perſecution, and miſery, and death. Then are they betrayed and periſhed, condemned to an eternal oblivion and obſcurity, notwithſtanding all that has been done to redeem them from it. So has providence wrought the nobleſt and moſt benevolent ſcheme to no purpoſe,—the holy lamb was ſlain in vain,—and the triumph over death and the grave was a vain and empty boaſt, ſince not a little of the power of either of them is deſtroyed or diminiſhed.

After this foundation thus laid, revelation may at leaſt be permitted to give her ſuffrage. That the dead are raiſed, even Moſes ſhewed at the buſh, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob, who, though loſt to the world, do yet ſubſiſt to him—for he is not a God of the DEAD, but of the LIVING—for all live to him. An argument by which we find our Lord effectually ſilenced the Sadducees, who after that durſt not aſk him any more queſtions, but which even commanded the applauſe of thoſe who at other times were his moſt avowed and inveterate enemies; and whatever effect this, and ſome ſimilar conſiderations might have on the generality of the nation, it is certain, that the Phariſees, the moſt diſtinguiſhed and moſt powerful ſect of the Jews, were ſo influenced by them, that St. Paul thought himſelf ſafe in throwing himſelf under their protection, when he cried out in full council, For the hope and reſurrection of the dead, am I this day called in queſtion.—And he found his advantage in the appeal. It muſt be almoſt unneceſſary to obſerve, with reſpect to the author of that covenant, which ſpeaketh better things than that of Moſes—that all his accounts of a future judgment—numerous

rous as they are, are conſtantly uſhered in with the previous circumſtance of a reſurrection: the rewards which he propoſes to his faithful followers, are founded ſolely in this. They are not to be raiſed to riches or honours, but to life immortal. And for all their ſufferings, all their loſſes, all their proofs of piety, and ſelf-denial, to receive a reward or recompence, not in this frail and uncertain life, but at the reſurrection of the juſt, when the ſea ſhall give up her dead, and death and hell ſhall give up their dead, and all that are in the graves ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of man, and ſhall come forth. Let me only ſubjoin, that after the example of their bleſſed maſter, a reſurrection was the conſtant doctrine of all his Apoſtles, and ſurely nothing can be more beautifully deſcribed, more pathetically inculcated, or, I will add, more inconteſtably proved, of which their writings are ſo many living teſtimonies; the chapter in particular from which our text was taken, is a moſt beautiful inſtance.

Here then let us ſtand ſtill, and admire, and adore the power of that hand which is to raiſe us from that lethargic ſleep, to reſcue us from the iron hand of the relentleſs enemy of nature, and the wiſdom and goodneſs of that being, who ſeeing that fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor corruption be partaker with incorruption, hath ordained this method to purify and ſpiritualiſe that body which is ſown a natural one, to lift up in power, in glory, and incorruption, that vile and miſerable carcaſe, which is depoſited in corruption, in weakneſs and diſhonour, that it may be faſhioned like unto the glorious body of our Lord, and capacitated for the enjoyment of honours and privileges, of which it was before totally and entirely incapable. And if this be to die, who would not be impatient to be diſſolved, and to ſit down with Abraham, and thoſe who have followed the faith of Abraham; with the great and good of every age and nation; to be joined to the glorious company of the Apoſtles, the goodly fellowſhip of the Prophets, and the noble

army of Martyrs? Who can be ſo weak as to ſorrow as a man without hope, at parting from the beſt beloved friend, the neareſt and deareſt relation, that conſiders that the day will come, after a very ſhort interval, when they ſhall meet in happier climes, never to part again? Where God ſhall wipe away all tears from every eye; where there ſhall be nothing to ſully or interrupt their renewed harmony; no jealouſy, envy, or ambition, to diſturb them; no ſorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain; but all ſhall be happineſs, becauſe all ſhall be harmony, and charity, and love! Is not this a conſummation devoutly to be wiſhed? If this be the reſult of putrefaction, who but muſt long, impatiently and ardently long, to be ſown even in tears, that he may be thus reaped in joy? But alas! it muſt not be concealed, that a reſurrection is not that object of hope and deſire to all alike, of the many who ſhall ſleep in the duſt of the earth, ſome only ſhall awake to immortality and joy, the reſt, and it is to be feared, too many, to ſhame and confuſion: for whom it were better that they could ſleep for ever, or that the rocks and mountains could obey their call, and cover and hide them from the wrath of the lamb, and from the vengeance of the living God; a conſideration which muſt ſurely ſuggeſt the neceſſity of a due preparation, that we may be able to ſtand in that evil day—evil indeed! to ſuch as ſhall be found by the bridegroom with an untrimmed lamp, and without a wedding garment. To ſuch it is an object of the juſteſt dread and terror. Wilt thou then not be afraid of a reſurrection?—Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have a joyful part therein. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid. For as HE is faithful who hath promiſed eternal life to thoſe, who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, ſo is HE juſt, who hath threatened indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, to every ſoul that doth evil, whether Jew or Gentile, whether bond or free, whether prince or peaſant. And this is that ſecond death from which there will be No reſurrection.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY XLVII.

Balaam's Wiſh.

NUMBERS, XXIII. 10:

LET ME DIE THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS, AND LET MY LAST END BE LIKE HIS.

AS we do not propoſe to conſider the words of our text in any other light than as a pathetical wiſh, in which every ſerious and good man will naturally join whenever he is diſpoſed to turn his thoughts on the conſummation of all things here below, it will be unneceſſary to trace the occaſion, or give you a circumſtantial account of the prophet who uttered them. You may, however, find ample ſatisfaction in theſe particulars, by turning to the twenty-ſecond, and the two ſubſequent chapters of the book of Numbers.

There cannot be a more effectual way to revive the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity in the world, than ſeriouſly to meditate on death; for it is morally impoſſible that men ſhould lead careleſs lives,—ſhould entirely devote themſelves to this world;—ſhould either caſt off the fear of God, and all reverence for his laws, or content themſelves with ſome cold and formal devotions, were they poſſeſſed with a warm and conſtant ſenſe of this important event. The path of death indeed is the track in which every one of us muſt tread! To this mark, and to this complexion muſt we turn, did we but aim aright. Were we reſolutely determined to remove folly from our

doors

doors, we ſhould frequently ſtimulate our blunted purpoſes of amendment, with ſome intereſting interrogatories, ſuch as follow. "Perceive we not that this life is inceſſantly waſting? Do we not "know, that ſwift as time is, we keep pace with his advances, "and by that are drawn towards our end?—Do we not feel "ourſelves every moment falling down with a current which "we cannot ſtem, and which therefore muſt bear us away, when it "diſcharges itſelf into the vaſt ocean of eternity? Is it not natural "then, that we ſhould inform ourſelves what that eternity will be, "unleſs like brutes we are wholly devoid of ſuch thought, and loſe "the proſpect of another life, by too fixed a view on the dazzling "deceptions of this?"

Can a man, conſidered as a thinking Being, paſs off his cooler hours, the hours of ſilence and retirement, without frequent ſoliloquies of this kind? "Can I be certified how long I have to live, or "can I deſcribe the bounds of my duration? By no means. There "is no certainty to be had in this world, but—in that of our de-"parture out of it. Whereto then am I haſtening? Or what ſhall "be my lot, when I go hence, and am no more ſeen? What will "be my deſtiny after the diſſolution of my fleſh? Shall I be buried "in endleſs oblivion? Or ſhall I ſurvive the wreck of matter, and "outlive the ruins of this body? If there be a ſecond life after this! "if there be a ſeparate ſtate of ſouls! it muſt be one where happi-"neſs or miſery know no limits, either in perfection or conti-"nuance? Whither then ſhall I run? or what path purſue to "eſcape perdition?"—Tremendous God!—"merciful Redeemer! "gracious ſpirit of wiſdom and of truth direct and guide me through "this perilous pilgrimage! and let me die the death of the righ-"teous, and let my laſt end be like his!"

That we muſt all die, is ſo ſelf-evident a truth, that no one in his right ſenſes would attempt to deny the aſſertion, ſeeing daily obſervation puts it beyond diſpute,--We may avail ourſelves therefore of this pathetic wiſh of the Prophet Balaam, and innumerable

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ſimilar paſſages interſperſed throughout the ſacred writings, and from thence learn to look with calmneſs and intrepidity on this our important change, notwithſtanding the direful certainty that there is no withſtanding the ſhafts of death—nay, no poſtponing the awful hour when the ſoul ſhall leave her earthly tabernacle, and when time ſhall be ſwallowed up in the immenſe abyſs of eternity.

It muſt be confeſſed, that there would appear ſome ſhow of reaſon for ſetting our hearts upon the empty and tranſitory pleaſures of this world, could we hope to live as many years as our fore-fathers before the flood, ſince the term of their lives was of long duration, ſometimes ſeven or eight hundred years—but even thoſe numerous years which they once ſaw, are paſt and gone, vaniſhed away as a tale that is told. When Jacob went down to Egypt to Pharaoh's court, being aſked by that king concerning his age, he anſwered, "the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred "and thirty years," which we ſhould eſteem prodigious for a man to live in theſe times, and yet as aſtoniſhing a courſe as this ſeems, the good Patriarch gives the following account of them—"Few "and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not "attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in "the days of their pilgrimage."

Now if an hundred and thirty years were deemed by Jacob as a term of ſo very little amount, well may we eſtimate our lives ſhort, and the number of our days few and inconſiderable. A life of fourſcore years goes among us for a great age, conſidering how ſmall a part of mankind comes up to that number, and yet, if a man looks back at forty or fifty years end, he will be ready to wonder how ſoon, how very ſoon, they are paſt and gone. Notwithſtanding which, the ſame number of years which he ſtill hopes to live, ſhall appear conſequential and numerous. The reaſon may be, that men can recollect a thouſand occurrences of their paſt lives, and contract them into a narrow compaſs in their thoughts. The troubles that have

have heretofore befel them, ſeem as nothing, and the difficulties they formerly ſtruggled with, are rather ſubjects of amuſement than misfortunes, when they are paſt and gone: but the pleaſures they once enjoyed dwell upon the mind, and appear with double luſtre, and as fine paintings grow much more valuable when time has mellowed every artful ſtroke, ſo when all the little diſagreeable accidents which leſſened our enjoyments, are wore away, the traces that are left of them in our minds are ſweet and grateful to remembrance. But notwithſtanding we thus recollect paſt delights with the utmoſt ſatisfaction, notwithſtanding we turn the magnifying end of the glaſs towards them, yet we are apt, and very juſtly, to declare them ſhort and tranſitory. But it is not ſo with the years that are to come, the fond hopes and deſires we have to enjoy them, and a great many projects and unknown pleaſures enlarge the idea of that term. Now if forty years paſt are, upon recollection, ſo fleeting and ſo few, what a poor addition ſhould ſuch another term make, if added to them; not conſiderable enough ſurely, to make them appear otherwiſe than ſhort! The enjoyments therefore of this world can be in compariſon but for a moment, and that moment perhaps daſhed with a thouſand ills. Is it not then a matter of wonder and amazement, that this ſpan of life, this ſtate of miſery, or at beſt but imperfect ſatisfaction, ſhould by ſo many be preferred to everlaſting bliſs, and an eternity of glory?

The conſideration therefore of the certainty of death, and the ſmall number of years the youngeſt of us all has to live in this world, might, one would imagine, make any thinking being very ſolicitous about the eternal welfare of his ſoul, ſeeing he muſt be convinced that is immortal, and according as his actions are, either good or bad, in this his ſtate of probation, will be either eternally miſerable, or perfectly happy to endleſs ages. Could we but perſuade the vicious man to reflect ſeriouſly how ſoon his latter end may be, would he not, think you, ſhudder and ſtart at the gloomy proſpect

that

that lies before him; at that dark gulph which gapes wide to devour him. None are ſurely ſo abandoned, ſo loſt to feeling as to have no hours of remorſe. Undoubtedly, the fears of another world will ſometimes unexpectedly appall and affright ſuch perſons. An uneaſy bed, an unlooked for affliction, will force them, whether they will or not, to make ſevere reflections on their paſt miſconduct, and the fatal conſequences of their evil actions. Though wicked men affect to appear jocund and pleaſant, whilſt they perſiſt in the actual commiſſion of the moſt enormous ſins, yet may we not attribute this compoſure to their dependance on the goodneſs and mercy of God, for ſome time and opportunity to repent, either when they ſhall be in a lingering ſickneſs, or in a declining age, muſt it not be this dependance that keeps back horror and deſpair from ſeizing upon them. Such a ſinner is apt to ſay to himſelf, or rather to his deſperate aſſociates,—" I am now young and healthful, " vigorous and ſtrong; my pulſe beats with all the regularity and " freedom imaginable—my blood runs briſkly through my veins, " my ſpirits are active and ſubtile, and I am not conſcious of the " leaſt decay, of any ſymptoms of an approaching ſickneſs. I have " as yet, in all probability, many years to come, why then ſhould I " harraſs my mind with the anxious thoughts of mortality and an- " other world, ſince I am but juſt entered upon the ſcene of this; " the gloomy recollection of death is altogether unſeaſonable, while " ſtrength, beauty, and health afford me more agreeable entertain- " ments. It will be time enough to look forward on eternity when " my body ſhall begin to decline, my ſtrength to decay, and I feel " death making his awful approaches." Vain and fooliſh man! do you hope for eternal happineſs in another life, and yet think to gratify all your inordinate paſſions, to indulge yourſelf in every ſenſuality of this? Can you ſtupidly imagine you may give the rein to every wayward humour, and comply with every ſinful temptation, and yet at laſt die the death of the righteous? Can you ſuppoſe the

great work of your ſalvation is to be done in a moment, and that, if you can but ſay, Lord! Lord! you ſhall inherit eternal life? No, ſurely! the moſt ſenſeleſs wretch breathing would, if he ever deviated into thought, ſee the folly of ſuch a ſuppoſition, and vehemently exclaim with Balaam—"Let me die the death of the righ-"teous, and let my laſt end be like his!"

We doubt not but the generality of our hearers have already ſuppoſed that the ſubject we have choſen for our preſent meditation, muſt be the reſult of ſome more than ordinary ſerious reflections—either during the laſſitude of a violent ſickneſs, or the agitation of an uncommon calamity. We admit the ſuppoſition, as we deem it the duty of every preacher to improve all opportunities, and none ſo proper as ſuch viſitations, and convert them into practical leſſons on the important concerns of that future ſtate—the poſſeſſion of which we are all haſtening to experience without hope, I mean rational hope of further probation.

We do not ſtand in this place to draw pictures of the glories of a periſhing world, or to diſplay the braveries of learning, or human eloquence, but to remind you in the plaineſt words we can deviſe, that we are joint candidates for a ſtate of perfect happineſs. Now what better uſe can we poſſibly make of our deliverance from hazardous ſickneſs, or imminent hair-breadth eſcapes, than while the mercy is freſh in our remembrance, and dwells in humble thankfulneſs on our imagination, to endeavour to impreſs on ourſelves and others, ſuitable reflections on the majeſty of that being, whoſe bounties we every day,—every hour—nay, every moment enjoy,—and who ſometimes rolls his awful thunder, and blazes forth his tremendous lightning, and threatens, nay ſometimes viſits his people with civil diſcords at home—waſteful and perplexing wars abroad—keen famine,—and peſtilential blaſts,—the jars of elements, and the more deſtructive ravages of wicked men—to find if there be any that

will

will be awakened and ſeek after the Lord, while haply he may be found.

Well then may many of us ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "I found "trouble and heavineſs—the ſnares of death compaſſed me, and the "pains of diſſolution got hold upon me." But then can we not alſo proclaim with him, that "gracious is the Lord and righteous, "yea, our God is merciful. What reward then ſhall I give unto "the Lord, for all the benefits that he hath done unto me? I will "receive the cup of ſalvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." This pious Pſalmiſt—this holy David, ſo profited by his afflictions, ſo fulfilled the duties of his ſtation, that he acquired the glorious title of the man after God's own heart. Theſe things, brethren, are written for our learning, that we ſhould profit by them, and ſo profit by them that we may die the death of the righteous, and that our laſt end may be like his.

Death puts a period, not only to the ambitious ſchemes, to the toils and fatigues, and to all the anxious cares of earthly-minded men; but to the works of the godly themſelves, to all the troubles and difficulties which they meet with in their tedious paſſage through this vale of tears; to their violent ſtruggles with their paſſions, which they ſometimes find very difficult to ſubdue, and to their frequent conflicts with their ſpiritual enemies, for in death the wicked ceaſe from troubling, ſays Job, and the weary are at reſt.

However, though death puts an end to all the tranſactions of this life, yet aſſuredly it is no more than a tranſition to, or an entrance upon a new, and ſurprizing ſtate, for notwithſtanding our bodies are corruptible, and lie mouldering in the duſt, yet they will never ceaſe to be, or loſe their exiſtence, and our ſpirits or ſouls will return to God, who gave them, and who knows where all the minuteſt particles whereof our reſpective bodies are compoſed, are ſcattered and diſperſt, and not only can, but undoubtedly will, at the laſt day, unite the ſame individual bodies, when they ſhall have been purified

and ſpiritualiſed; when they ſhall have put on immortality and incorruption, with the very ſame ſouls, in order to their being for ever happy or miſerable together, according to their conduct and behaviour here, in this our ſtate of probation.

The ſoul, however will, we imagine, have no ſmall portion of felicity or torment the very moment of its ſeparation and releaſe from the body to which it was before united: thus freed and diſencumbered, it is repreſented in the ſacred volumes, as far enough from being ſunk into a ſtate, either of inaction or inſenſibility. To think is of the eſſence of the reaſonable ſoul, it muſt therefore, of neceſſity, think, as long as it has any exiſtence. It is true, death is frequently compared to a ſleep, but during the union of the ſoul with the body, whilſt the ſenſes are locked up, and the body is in a ſtate of inactivity, the ſoul can exert thoſe faculties which peculiarly belong to her; ſhe can conſider, recollect, draw concluſions, and be ſenſible both of pleaſure and pain. Nay more, for we find by frequent experience, that things are ſometimes repreſented in a ſtronger and more lively manner in our dreams, and imprinted deeper in our minds than they would be, were we actually awake. If this be indeed the caſe, why may not the ſoul, in her ſtate of ſeparation, reflect on its conduct, whilſt united to the body, and look forward to that new and eternal ſtate to which it is now irrecoverably determined, and in which it muſt, together with that individual body from whence it was releaſed, be for ever puniſhed or rewarded. What reaſon can be aſſigned why this ſhould not be the joy rejoicing of the ſoul of a righteous man, even the teſtimony of his conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity he has had his converſation in the world, and that he is at preſent under no manner of danger, with reſpect to his eternal felicity—that he hath faithfully diſcharged his duty towards God, and has nothing more to do than to reap the fruits of his obedience to the divine will? What reaſon can be aſſigned on the other hand, why the ſoul of the earthly-minded

minded man ſhould not reflect with the utmoſt remorſe and compunction on the many enormous ſins it had committed, and look forwards with horror and confuſion on thoſe eternal torments which are prepared for it, and will unavoidably be its portion. Upon this direful proſpect, theſe or the like gloomy reflections muſt moſt certainly ariſe. "Into what a deplorable ſtate and condition am I "now irrecoverably plunged! my day of grace, alas, is paſt and "gone! the ſeaſon of my repentance and reconciliation with my "God, whom I have highly provoked, and from whoſe juſt wrath "I can never eſcape, is now over. Nothing now remains but a "fearful looking for his fiery indignation, which flaſhes already "upon me, and I muſt feel, alas! the tormenting effects of his "divine diſpleaſure to all eternity!"

Why may not thoſe reflections, and thoſe proſpects of the ſouls, both of the righteous and the ungodly, when in a ſtate of ſeparation from their bodies, be earneſts of thoſe more complete and more abſolute tranſports or torments which will be their eternal lot at the great day of their re-union? What farther felicity the ſouls of the righteous may be capable of, when the bodies to which they reſpectively belonged, are mouldering in the duſt, or what further agonizing pains the ſouls of the ungodly may endure in their dark and gloomy priſons to which they are conſigned till the laſt trumpet ſhall ſound, and the ſon of God ſhall come to judge both the quick and the dead—who can preſume to determine? But this is explicitly revealed to us, that both the one and the other ſhall either be very happy or very miſerable for ever and for ever.

Though nothing can be more certain, than that we ſhall one day die, yet nothing can be more uncertain and precarious than the day or the hour thereof. Whether death ſhall come gradually upon us, through any lingering or painful diſtemper, by which means we may have our affections weaned from the world, and fixed upon a better and a future ſtate, or whether it ſhall ſurpriſe us without the leaſt warning,

warning, like a thief in the night, when we are unprepared for ſo ſudden a change—what human foreſight can poſſibly determine?

Now ſeeing that it is ſo indiſputably true that we muſt die, but at what particular time the wiſeſt of us all is unable to foretell: ſo it is equally certain that the time will ſoon come, that it will not be long before the youngeſt of us all ſhall drop into the ſilent grave, where our bodies ſhall crumble into duſt, and lie in a ſtate of inaction till their re-union with their reſpective ſouls at the day of judgment. A frequent recollection therefore of this great truth, and a conſtant application of it to the regulation and conduct of our lives, ought to be the object of our ſerious meditation, becauſe no man can obtain that wiſh ſo ardently aſpired after by the Prophet Balaam in our text, but by ſuch a practical conſideration.

Serious and profitable meditations on death will make a man wiſe, not only for this world, but that which is to come. In regard to this life, that doubtleſs is true wiſdom and underſtanding, which will carry a man beſt through it, with the leaſt trouble and fatigue, and with the leaſt anxiety of mind. Moſt of the ſorrows and vexations which we meet with here below, ariſe either from our too eager and reſtleſs purſuit after the pleaſures and profits of this world, or from thoſe ſevere misfortunes which ſometimes attend us by the wiſe appointment or permiſſion of divine providence. Now a ſerious reflection on our latter end will conduce very much towards the prevention or removal of the former, and the alleviation of the torments which we feel under the latter. Did we but ſet before the eyes of our mind, the laſt ſcene of our lives, before we quit the ſtage of this troubleſome world, and duly conſider what thoughts we ſhould then entertain of all the profits and pleaſures of it, it would make us much more cool and indifferent; it would wean our affections from all ſuch momentary enjoyments. Imagine then, though ſuch a ſerious ſuppoſition may not poſſibly be very entertaining to ſome, yet it will doubtleſs tend to the edification of all—

imagine

imagine yourſelves, I ſay, not only on a ſick, but a dying bed, attended by your neareſt and deareſt relatives, all weeping round you; imagine all artful preſcriptions of the moſt able and experienced phyſicians for your recovery altogether uſeleſs and ineffectual; imagine your ſinking ſpirits ſo far ſpent, or a raging fever ſo far advanced, that there is no proſpect of your labouring many hours longer under the weakneſs of the one, or the fury of the other—no expectation of relief, nothing remaining but a kind of fearful certainty that this night your ſoul ſhall be required of you. At this time your eyes are opened; you now behold the pomps and vanities of a periſhing world in a true light, and are capable of making a juſt and impartial eſtimate of this fleeting world.—Give me leave to aſk you what figure do they now make? In what form do they appear to you now? Are they, in reality, thoſe things in which you once took ſo much delight, which once you purſued with ſuch earneſtneſs and unwearied application? Will they now afford you that ſolid ſatisfaction which you once flattered yourſelf they would? Will they, upon the trial, give you any relief, or prove any amuſement to your preſent thoughts? Can you with any real pleaſure look back on all your worldly poſſeſſions, when you are juſt entering on another world, and going to be locked up in a narrow coffin? Can you reflect with the leaſt ſatisfaction on your almoſt inexhauſtible ſtores, or the numberleſs acres of ground you are now poſſeſſed of, when in a few moments you will be lodged within a dark and ſilent grave, of only ſix or eight feet in its dimenſions? Will pompous titles delight you now? Ah, no! The grave knows no manner of diſtinction between the beggar and the king. Will luxurious acquiſitions alleviate your agoniſing pains, or give any check to the horrors of a guilty conſcience? Will they any ways abate the violence of your diſtemper, or prevent your falling into duſt and aſhes? Will they, in ſhort, prove any conſolation to your ſoul in her ſeparate ſtate, after her diſſolution from the body, or be in the leaſt aſſiſtant

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to you at that tremendous day, when the great judge of all the earth ſhall ſummon you to give an account of all your actions? Will your wealth be able to bribe him in your favour, or ſuborn one witneſs that is to appear againſt you? Can they purchaſe you either a pardon, or indeed ſo much as one moment's reprieve? No, doubtleſs they cannot, but on the contrary, if your riches have been made an ill uſe of, or your power has been exerted in the oppreſſion of the poor—or any of your earthly acquirements have contributed towards your ſucceſsful progreſs in the paths of vice, they will only prove aggravations of your woe, make a ſevere clauſe in your indictment, and appear as inconteſtable evidences to juſtify and defend it.

Is this, ſays the ſerious inquirer, the true ſtate of the caſe? Is there no relief, no comfort to be procured from my numerous poſſeſſions, and my gay companions? Are they all but empty toys, all but flattering, deluſive vanities—can they no ways conduce to the quiet, either of my body or my mind? Can they neither prolong my days in this world, nor attend me in that which is to come?—O then, I have been much to blame—fool that I was to fix ſo ſtrongly my affections on ſuch empty, tranſitory pleaſures. From henceforth I will apply my heart unto wiſdom—and ſo live as that I may die the death of the righteous, and that my laſt end may be like his.

To ſum up the whole matter.—If a man could perſuade himſelf that this day will prove his laſt,—and who can preſume to affirm that it will not be ſo? he would not even ſay, I will defer my repentance till to-morrow. If he could think that the meal now before him would be the laſt he ever ſhould partake of, he would certainly forbear to act the glutton's part. If he could believe that the words he ſpeaks to-day ſhould be the laſt words that ever he ſhould ſpeak, he would be peculiarly careful not to offend with his tongue.—If he could be verily perſuaded that this ſermon ſhould be the laſt ſermon that ever he ſhould hear, he would no doubt liſten to it with

more

more attention and fervency of devotion than ever he exerted before. Now breath is in our body, and the heart may apply itſelf. We can but teach you with words. We can but prepare and exhort you to number your days in ſuch ſort as that you may die the death of the righteous. We indulge a hope indeed by the bleſſing of God on our weak endeavours, that we may afford you ſome aſſiſtance towards this uſeful reckoning. Attend then to our voice. It may be thou haſt but twenty years to ſerve God. Wilt thou not live twenty years like a Chriſtian, that thou mayſt live twenty thouſand years like an Angel? It may be thou haſt but ten years to ſerve God. Wilt thou not ſerve ten years for heaven, when thou wouldſt gladly ſerve twenty years for an earthly fortune? It may be thou haſt but five years to ſerve God. Wilt thou not ſpend five years well? Wilt thou not redeem all thy years for five? Yet God alone knoweth whether many here have even ſo long to repent for all the years which they have ſpent in ſin. If thou wert born but this very day, thy journey is not an hundred years. If thou art a man, one half of thy time is ſpent already. If thou beeſt an old man, then thou art drawing to the goal, and thy race is but a breath. As Chriſt therefore ſaid unto his diſciples when he found them ſleeping—what!—could ye not watch one hour? So ſay I to myſelf and you—can we not pray? Can we not ſuffer a little while? He who is tired can proceed a little way, a little farther, one ſtep more for the attainment of everlaſting glory. For this cauſe, God Almighty, in his boundleſs benevolence and wiſdom conceals from men the day and hour whereon they ſhall die, becauſe they ſhould be duly prepared, like the wiſe virgins, with oil in their lamps at all times, having no more certainty of one hour than another. Thus you ſee, that the time of man is ſet, that his race is ſhort—but alas! few think of it as they ought.

" Some of the hiſtories of that victorious emperor, Charles the " Fifth, record, that to impreſs the deeper apprehenſions of his

" death, he cauſed his own funeral to be ſolemnized, while he was " yet living. He laid himſelf down in his tomb, and had that " rare fate of great perſons, to be lamented with true tears—we " mean, his own. If this great monarch received any benefit by " this farce, by dying thus firſt in emblem, we may almoſt daily " have the ſame. It will be no great miſtake to account every " funeral we attend, to be our own. Let us imagine ourſelves " nailed up in the coffin, laid in the grave, covered over with earth, " and putrifying to worms and dirt. This is only to anticipate for " a few days what ſhall be. Not a grave opens its mouth, but it " plainly ſpeaks thus much, that we are mortal and periſhing. Not " a rotten bone, nor a dead ſkull ſcattered about the confines of " the dead, but tells us we muſt ſhortly take up our abode with " them in the ſame dreary darkneſs. And if, upon evey ſuch ſad " occaſion, we make not particular application of it to ourſelves; we " not only loſe our friends lives, but their very deaths too; yet " herein are we generally faulty. When God ſnatcheth them from " us, we uſually reflect more upon the loſs, than the example; and " thereby, as he deprives us of the comfort we had in their lives, " ſo we deprive ourſelves of the inſtruction and benefit we might " have by their deaths." Let theſe, and ſuch like conſiderations, urge us, my brethren, to improve every moment that ſhall be added to our lives, that finally we may obtain the Prophet Balaam's wiſh, and die the death of the righteous, and that our laſt end may be like his.

To conclude.—As the ſubject matter of this diſcourſe is a concern of the laſt importance, it is, doubtleſs, highly worthy our moſt ſerious attention. And notwithſtanding it is ſo frequently preſſed upon you from the pulpit, yet as nature is apt to ſhudder at the thought, we ſhould have recourſe to every mode that can be deviſed to render this phyſick of our ſouls as palatable as poſſible in the adminiſtration. We ſhall therefore cloſe our diſcourſe with a Meditation

tation on Death, compoſed by the late pious and learned Dr. Norris, and enforced by the aid and aſſiſtance of poetic numbers. We have indeed often wondered, that ſuch important truths, ſuch ſublime topics, have not been frequently diſplayed, even at our moſt ſolemn aſſemblies, in that alluring dreſs, and more eſpecially, ſince in former ages, that divine art was peculiarly devoted to the ſervice of religion and the temple.

THE

MEDITATION.

I.

IT muſt be done—my ſoul—but 'tis a ſtrange,
A diſmal and myſterious change,
When thou ſhalt leave this tenement of clay,
And to an unknown ſomewhere wing away;
When time ſhall be eternity, and thou
Shalt be thou know'ſt not what, and live thou know'ſt not how.

II.

Amazing ſtate! no wonder that we dread
To think of death, or view the dead.
Thou'rt all wrapt up in clouds, as if to thee
Our very knowledge had antipathy;
Death could not a more ſad retinue find,
Sickneſs and pain before, and darkneſs all behind.

III.

Some courteous ghoſt, tell this great ſecreſy,
What 'tis you are, and we muſt be.
You warn us of approaching death, and why
May we not know from you what 'tis to die?
But you, having ſhot the gulph, delight to ſee
Succeeding ſouls plunge in with like uncertainty.

IV.

When life's cloſe knot, by writ from deſtiny,
Diſeaſe ſhall cut, or age unty;
When after ſome delay, ſome dying ſtriſe,
The ſoul ſtands ſhivering on the ridge of life;
With what a dreadful curioſity
Does ſhe launch out into the ſea of vaſt eternity!

V.

So when the ſpacious globe was delug'd o'er,
And lower holds could ſave no more,
On the utmoſt bough th' aſtoniſh'd ſinners ſtood,
And view'd th' advances of th' encroaching flood
O'ertopp'd at length by th' elements encreaſe,
With horror they reſign'd to the untry'd abyſs.

SUNDAY XLVIII.

The Certainty of a Day of Judgment.

ACTS, XVII. 31.

HE HATH APPOINTED A DAY IN THE WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BY THAT MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; WHEREOF HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.

THE words we have now read to you, are part of a very warm and earneſt expoſtulation of the Apoſtle St. Paul with the Athenians, who were then aſſembled together in a great multitude on Mar's-hill, out of curioſity to liſten to his new doctrine. In this addreſs he reproves them for being over ſuperſtitious, and for paying the tribute of divine adoration to that God, of whom, by the very inſcription on their altar, it was plain they had but little, if any knowledge or conception.—Whereupon he endeavours to enlighten their underſtandings, and give them an awful idea of the only living and true God, the great author of nature. He tells them that "God who made the world, and all things "therein, ſeeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not "in temples made with hands; neither is worſhipped with men's "hands, as though he needed any thing, ſeeing he giveth to all "life, and breath, and all things." And in order to confirm them

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in this juſt and exalted idea of his creating power, he produces a quotation from one of their own poets, who tells them, that in him, that is, in the ſupreme Being, the firſt principle of all things, and the great architect of the univerſe, we live, move, and have our being; and immediately after, not only aſſigns a ſufficient reaſon for that aſſertion, but draws an undeniable concluſion againſt ſuperſtition and idolatry from it; for, ſays he, we are all his offspring; and "foraſmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to "think, that the Godhead is like unto gold, or ſilver, or ſtone, "graven by art and man's device." However, he acknowledges, as a ſort of an alleviation of the guilt of idol-worſhip in former ages, that God connived at the ignorance of thoſe times, but then he immediately ſubjoins, that now, that is, in the enlightened age in which they lived, he commandeth all men every where to repent. And thereupon, in the words of our text, aſſigns an inconteſtible reaſon for their compliance with that injunction; "becauſe, ſays he, "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in "righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he "hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him "from the dead."

Is it not a ſtrange perverſeneſs in human nature, that notwithſtanding all are certain they ſhall die, and moſt men believe they ſhall be called to judgment, yet they are unaccountably inattentive to any diſcourſes on theſe important topics? They hear them with an aſtoniſhing degree of unconcern—as men not all intereſted in the truth or falſehood of what may be advanced. It is highly requiſite however, in deſpite of this lukewarmneſs, that we ſhould ſometimes preſs theſe ſubjects with all the force and energy we are able. Theſe conſiderations, therefore, have induced me to offer you ſome arguments, both from reaſon and revelation, to prove, that however diſtant the day of judgment may ſeem to be, yet that it will inevitably come.

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The heathens themſelves, from the dim light of nature, and the dint of reaſon only, could diſcover, beyond all contradiction, that there was one all-wiſe creator of the univerſe, and every thing therein contained; that every ſpecies of beings, of what nature or kind ſoever, was ſubject to his divine will, and governed and directed by his over-ruling providence; that man was compoſed of body and ſoul; and that though the former was a maſs of clay, and ſubject to corruption, yet the latter was both immaterial and immortal; that there were judges appointed, in the infernal regions, to examine into the actions of ſuch as were deceaſed, in order to reward thoſe who had ſpent their lives in a regular courſe of virtue, and to puniſh thoſe who had indulged in vice, or had ſhewed no marks of veneration for the Gods; and this was a ſubject very frequently diſcourſed on amongſt them, and in that ſenſe they univerſally acknowledged a future judgment: but the will of God, which is revealed to us in the ſacred ſcriptures, has given us a much plainer aſſurance of this general day of retribution, and has enabled us to make much clearer diſcoveries thereof, than we poſſibly could by the dim light of nature. Though reaſon alone, without divine revelation, may convince us, as it did the heathen world, that the virtuous ſhall meet with ſome ſuitable recompence or reward, and the wicked ſome puniſhment, proportioned to their demerits in the world to come; yet it could never inform us, that there would be a general day of judgment, in which all thoſe that were dead ſhould riſe again from their graves, that their ſcattered particles of duſt ſhould be re-united, and that their ſouls ſhould reſume their former ſtation; it could never point out to us the particular perſon that ſhould ſummon us to appear before him on that great and awful day, nor give us any adequate idea of the pomp and ſolemnity of it. This the world was wholly unacquainted with, before the promulgation of the goſpel; ſince all theſe circumſtances abſolutely depend upon the free will and pleaſure of that God who made the world, and conſequently, can be diſ-

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covered no other way, than by his own revelation. However, as reaſon alone gives us a moral evidence and aſſurance that there will be a future judgment, and the ſacred ſcriptures confirm the important truth, I am perſuaded, that the arguments which may be drawn from both, if duly attended to, may be ſufficient to convince the moſt obſtinate unbeliever. Firſt then, as we are conſcious to ourſelves, that the brutal part of the creation, which are governed by inſtinct only, can never be called to an account for their actions, becauſe they have no knowledge of what they do; ſo, on the other hand, as man is endowed with rational faculties, and knows perfectly well whatever he does, there ariſes a very ſtrong preſumption, that he may be judged, or ſummoned to give an account for his conduct and behaviour.

Did man act by neceſſity or fate, and not by choice, he would be no more capable of being judged than the brutal part of the creation, or any inanimate being whatſoever; but as he is a free agent, and not only knows how to diſtinguiſh between good and evil, but can make choice of the one, and avoid the other, he is conſequently capable of commendation or reproof, of rewards or puniſhments, according to his works.

If the Almighty has preſcribed laws for the regulation of man's conduct, can it reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that the violation or obſervance of them, can be a matter of indifference? If ſo, to what purpoſe were they given? No human government was ever ſo remiſs, ſo regardleſs of their laws, as not to commend thoſe who complied with them, or at leaſt, to puniſh thoſe who acted in open defiance and contempt of them; and ſhall we charge the Almighty with ſuch abſurdities in the government of the world, as the weakeſt of the human ſpecies would bluſh to be guilty of? Would we allow God, in ſhort, to be but as wiſe and diſcreet as one of our potentates here on earth, we might conclude, with all the aſſurance imaginable,

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that as he has preſcribed laws for the regulation and government of mankind, ſo he will judge them by thoſe laws.

And as man is a free agent, there is no other way can poſſibly be thought of to work upon him, than by the hope of ſome future reward, or the apprehenſion of ſome future puniſhment. For, as a free agent, he cannot be governed by force, or arbitrary power, ſince that would, to all intents and purpoſes deſtroy his liberty: from whence it undeniably follows, that if the Almighty has any ſway or dominion over mankind at all, he muſt call them to an account, and muſt reward or puniſh them according to their works. And though this does not in direct terms, fully, and beyond all contradiction, demonſtrate a future judgment, yet it is a ſtrong preſumption at leaſt, that there will be a general day appointed for that purpoſe. All that I propoſe to infer from what has been hitherto ſaid, is this, that in caſe the Almighty governs mankind as rational Beings, he muſt call them to an account, that is, bring them to judgment.

But further, to demonſtrate the certainty of a future judgment, let us have recourſe to the ſacred ſcriptures. He that made the world, can beſt acquaint us with the manner in which it will be diſpoſed of: as his decrees are backed by omnipotence, what he directs and appoints muſt inevitably come to paſs. Now, we find this important truth confirmed by the expreſs declarations of our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, as well as by his holy Apoſtles.

" The hour is coming, ſaith Chriſt, in which all that are in their " graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth, they that have " done good, unto the reſurrection of life, and they that have done " evil unto the reſurrection of damnation." St. Paul tells us, in the Epiſtle to the Corinthians, " That we muſt all appear before the " judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things " done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be " good or bad." Though there are various places in the ſacred

ſcriptures, beſides thoſe already quoted, which might be enumerated for the confirmation of this awful and intereſting truth, yet we ſhall have recourſe but to one more, and that is, the remarkable argument which St. Paul makes uſe of in our text, "God, ſays he, "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in "righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof "he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him "from the dead."

Since therefore, it is highly juſt and reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the Almighty will judge the whole race of mankind at one ſolemn and grand aſſize, that grand and ſolemn aſſize muſt moſt aſſuredly be reſerved to the day wherein the whole frame of nature ſhall be diſſolved. At the end of the world, the angels ſhall ſeparate the wheat from the tares, which grew in the ſame field; between the good and the bad fiſh, which were caught in the ſame net: In the goſpel, according to St. Matthew, we find the day of judgment, called the evening of the world, when the Lord ſhall come to reckon with his ſervants, and to reward thoſe who have laboured in his vineyard, and likewiſe to puniſh all ſuch as have concealed thoſe talents with which they were entruſted. And St. Peter, in his ſecond Epiſtle to the ſtrangers who were ſcattered throughout Pontus and Galatia, and divers other remote parts of the earth, gives them all the aſſurance imaginable, not only that the Saviour of mankind would moſt certainly come to judgment—againſt thoſe ſcorners who at that time diſputed againſt it; ſaying, where is the promiſe of his coming, ſince all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?—But further warns them, for the long patience of God, to haſten their repentance; and more eſpecially, not to defer it one moment longer; "Becauſe the day of the Lord, ſays he, "will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens ſhall "paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with "fervent heat, the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall

"be

" be burnt up." Having given them this aſſurance of the certainty of the thing, and informed them, that it would come to paſs; the practical uſe which he there makes of it is this in the words immediately following, " ſeeing then, ſays he, that all theſe things ſhall " be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought ye to be in all holy " converſation and godlineſs."

And moreover, it ſeems very reaſonable, that the day of judgment, and the diſſolution of the whole frame of nature ſhould come together; for as the earth was principally created for the convenience and delight of man, whom the Almighty conſtituted Lord of the univerſe; ſo it is highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that it ſhould be reduced to aſhes at the time when its inhabitants ſhould be ſummoned out of it, to make their general appearance at Chriſt's awful tribunal. When all the righteous ſhall be made partakers of the heavenly kingdom, and all the wicked ſhall be conſigned to the regions of darkneſs, this world will have laſted then as long as the Almighty propoſed it ſhould; and muſt for that reaſon, be new moulded, or caſt into a new frame, though not abſolutely deſtroyed. For ſo the ſacred ſcriptures repreſent it;—that as the whole creation was by Adam's fall, made liable to corruption, ſo when he and his poſterity ſhould be redeemed from it, the world ſhould be ſo too. It ſhould be purged by fire, and another which ſhould be incorruptible ſhould ſpring out of its aſhes. " For the earneſt expecta- " tion of the creature, ſays St. Paul to the Romans, waiteth for the " manifeſtation of the ſons of God." And thus St. Peter aſſures us, likewiſe, " that at the laſt judgment this world ſhall be deſtroyed " with fire, nevertheleſs, we, ſays he, according to his promiſe, " look for a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righ- " teouſneſs." And thus St. John, at the cloſe of his revelation, immediately after his deſcription of the laſt day, gives us a particular account of this new heaven, and new earth. " And I ſaw a new " heaven, and a new earth: for the firſt heaven and the firſt earth

" were paſſed away, and there was no more ſea; and I, John, ſaw " the holy city, the new Jeruſalem, coming down from God out of " heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her huſband. And I heard " a great voice out of heaven, ſaying, the tabernacle of God is with " men, and they ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with " them, and be their God. And God ſhall wipe away all tears " from their eyes; and there ſhall be no more death; neither " ſorrow nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more pain; for the " former things are paſſed away." Though it muſt be acknowledged, that theſe truths are too myſterious for our perfect comprehenſion at preſent; yet it gives us a ſatisfactory account, why the laſt judgment ſhall not be till the evening of the world; becauſe the frame of this old world muſt be diſſolved before the new heaven and the new earth before mentioned can be made. The final ſentence of condemnation of the wicked muſt be therefore paſt, as ſoon as this old world ſhall be reduced to aſhes; and the recompence and reward of the righteous ſhall then be conſummated at the creation of the new world, be the nature of it what it will, where they ſhall dwell in the immediate preſence of that God, who commandeth all men every where to repent, becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.

In the further illuſtration of theſe words, I ſhall dwell on two points more, as highly worthy of our notice; namely, the character of the man whom God hath ordained to be our judge; and what ſufficient reaſons we have to be well aſſured that he, and no other ſhall be ſo.

And firſt, as to the man whom the Almighty has made choice of, and appointed for the execution of that important office. He is no leſs a perſon than his dearly beloved Son, the man Chriſt Jeſus: and that divine man has aſſured us himſelf, as well as his Holy Apoſtles,

that

that his father will not judge the world immediately by himſelf, but reſign it abſolutely to the conduct and unerring judgment of his ſon. " The father, ſaith St. John the Evangeliſt, judgeth no man, " but hath committed all judgment to the ſon." Again, " the Son " of man, ſaith St. Matthew, ſhall come in the glory of his father, " with his angels, and then ſhall he reward every man according to " his works." And St. Peter, in diſcourſing with Cornelius, about our Bleſſed Lord and Saviour, aſſures him, that all the Apoſtles in general were commanded by him to preach unto the people, and to teſtify, " that it is he who was ordained by God to be the judge " both of the quick and the dead."

However, as it would be needleſs to enumerate all the texts of ſcripture that might be produced for the confirmation of this point, and ſince the caſe is too plain and obvious to need any farther proof, I ſhall proceed to enquire into the reaſon, why Chriſt Jeſus, ſhould, for the generality, be repreſented as a man, or the ſon of man, whenever he is introduced as the ſole perſon appointed to be the judge of the whole earth: he is that man whom God hath ordained, and the ſon of man. And moreover, we find, in the goſpel according to St. John, that the bleſſed Jeſus aſſures us, " that " God, for this reaſon, hath given him authority to execute judg- " ment, becauſe he is the ſon of man."

Now the principal reaſon why our Bleſſed Lord is thus ſpoken of as a man, and the ſon of man, when he ſhall come and act in the capacity of judge of the whole world, we conceive to be this, becauſe he will at that time appear viſibly, and as much in the form of a man, as he did when he was incarnate, and reſided here upon earth; tho' he will, doubtleſs, make his appearance in a much more ſolemn and pompous manner, and more like the Son of the Great God, the Lord of both heaven and earth. Give me leave to lay before you the beautiful deſcription, which the prophet Daniel has given us of his glorious appearance upon that awful day, " I ſaw, ſays he, " the night viſions, and behold one like the Son of Man came

" with

" with the clouds of heaven, and came to the antient of days, and " they brought him near before him. And there was given him " dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, " and languages ſhould ſerve him; his dominion is an everlaſting " dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom that " which ſhall not be deſtroyed:" It is the Son of Man, on whom this glory, and this kingdom is conferred, and it is he who is to act, or officiate as the Son of Man.

There are ſome, indeed, imagine, that the Bleſſed Jeſus ſtiles himſelf, ſo frequently as he does, the Son of Man, in regard to his ſtate of humiliation, whilſt here upon earth; but it is evident, beyond all contradiction, that their notion is groundleſs; for that particular term, the Son of Man, has no reference throughout the whole ſacred ſcriptures to ſuch a mean and narrow circumſtance of life, as diſtinguiſhes one part of the human ſpecies from another; but it either denotes nothing more than a man, or has ſome relation to the common infirmities of human nature; and when this phraſe is applied in the Old Teſtament to any particular perſon, it is never made uſe of as a characteriſtick, or mark of an inferior perſon, but of ſome powerful prince, or Holy Prophet. Thus a voice ſaid to Ezekiel, " Son of Man ſtand upon " thy feet;" ſo likewiſe the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Daniel; underſtand O Son of man! and our bleſſed Lord himſelf intimates to us, by his title, or denomination of the ſon of man, that he is that great and awful perſon before mentioned in the viſions of the Prophet Daniel; the ſole Man, in ſhort, that is ordained to be judge of the whole race of mankind.

Having ſhewn that our Bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt is the only Man thus ordained to judge both the quick and the dead, we ſhall proceed to aſſign ſome reaſons, to prove, how fit it is, that he, who died for the ſalvation of ſinners, ſhould be the perſon appointed to ſummon them before his awful Tribunal, and bring them to judgment.

Firſt then, it is but juſt that he who laid by his antient glory and cloathed himſelf in the livery of guilt and ſhame, ſhould reaſſume that native majeſty and ſplendour in the face of univerſal Mankind. That he who made an humble ſtoop from the throne to the manger, from the government of the world, to the life of a mean ſubject; ſhould at laſt be illuſtriouſly advanced as much above the heights of human grandeurs as then he was below them. Is it not fit that that holy and divine perſon who was buffeted,—condemned,—and crucified by an injurious world, ſhould righteouſly judge his judges? That Herod may ſee that he perſecuted not the infant King of a little Province, but the ſovereign of men and angels. That Pontius Pilate and the Jews may be convinced that he whom they called King in ſcorn, is in reality a greater Emperor than Cæſar. And that thoſe who were ſcandalized at the Croſs and averſe to the belief of an humble Saviour, may ſee the ſhame and confutation of their infidelity and their folly—Let them behold the exaltation of the Holy Jeſus above all the poſſibilities of worldly glories.—Upon this account it is reaſonable and becoming that the man Chriſt Jeſus ſhould be the judge. But above all becauſe he contracted an alliance with our natures—experimentally knew and felt the infirmities of our ſtate. If the ſupreme Deity in his ſimple eſſence ſhould ſit in judgment on us, we ſhould be confounded and aſtoniſhed at the majeſty of his preſence, and his greatneſs would make us afraid.—For who can bear the dazzling glory?—Who can ſtand before a throne ſurrounded with incomprehenſible light.—This glory is therefore allayed by the interpoſal of human nature, and this light wears a viel upon it to encourage our approaches.—Yea it is our brother and our friend—He that loved us and died for us, who is the man appointed to be our judge.—We are confident that he hath now the ſame compaſſion as when he wept over an obſtinate City, and the ſame love as when he bled, and died for a rebellious world. He knows the ſtrength of our temptations, he knows the weakneſs of our natures;

tures; ſo that the faithful may chearfully appear before his throne confeſſing their ſins and relying upon his love. He that loved us,—and was like unto us—is to take our accounts; in one word,—O Glorious Mercy!—OUR REDEEMER IS TO BE OUR JUDGE.

It is very meet, right, and fit that the Saviour of the world ſhould be the judge of it, becauſe the power and authority of judging is eſſential to the notion and authority of a Saviour.

Now to be the Saviour of mankind, is to deliver them from their ſins.—That is the true import of that emphatical name Jeſus.—And to deliver them from their ſins, is to abſolve them from the puniſhment due to them; and that is, to free them from the wrath and diſpleaſure of an offended Deity, from the curſe of the law, from death and hell, to raiſe them from the dead, and to confer upon them an immortal, and never-fading crown of glory. Now there are various acts which muſt concur, in order to render their ſalvation perfect and complete, and judgment is the laſt. And he only can be a complete Saviour who has full power to condemn, to acquit, and to reward.

As God is a pure Being, and can never be reconciled to ſinful man, till he is made pure, it is highly requiſite, that he, who is his Saviour ſhould change his nature, and make him holy as God is holy: for without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. Again, he muſt be a great Prophet, and a powerful Preacher, in order to turn men from darkneſs unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And as God is juſt and righteous, and has declared, that he who is guilty of ſin ſhall die, it is therefore requiſite, that the Saviour of ſinners ſhould make an atonement for their ſins, ſhould deliver them from the curſe of the law, by being made a curſe for them, and intercede with God on their behalf. A ſinner, however, is not ſaved, till he is finally abſolved; and judgment compleats his ſalvation. Chriſt, therefore, could not have been the Saviour of mankind, if he had not been their judge. For which reaſon, after he had died for them, and thereby made an expia-

tion

tion for their ſins, he tells his Diſciples, " All power is given " unto me both in heaven and in earth:" and this power is the reward of his obedience, and the ſufferings he underwent for our ſakes. " Therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name " above every name; that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould " bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under " the earth; and that every tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus " Chriſt is Lord to the glory of God the Father." His power as a Saviour, is aſcribed to his interceſſion for us, " Wherefore he is " able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by " him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them." And as our reconciliation to God is imputed to Chriſt's death, ſo is our ſalvation aſcribed unto his life: " for if, ſays St. Paul, when we " were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of " his Son; much more being reconciled, we ſhould be ſaved by " his life;" that is, freed from the indignation of the Almighty, by the power of a living Saviour. Upon the ſame account, Chriſt is ſaid " to be delivered for our offences, and to be raiſed again for " our juſtification," that is, finally to abſolve us, and pardon all our ſins at the day of judgment.

But there is another very cogent reaſon why our Saviour ſhould be our judge, and that is, becauſe this gives a ſanction to all the methods of ſalvation. This will give a great weight and authority to all his laws and counſels, to conſider, that he who aſſumed the human nature, on purpoſe to declare the will of God to us, ſhall come again to judge us by that goſpel which he preached. There would be no reaſon why the Saviour of the world ſhould have preached at all, or have given any laws to mankind, if he intended to have no regard to them, when he ſhall come to judge the world, but if the judge of the whole earth become a preacher, it is a duty highly incumbent on us to hearken to his inſtruction; for whether

we will be obedient to his laws or not, we muſt indiſputably be judged by them.

This likewiſe will give ample credit to all his promiſes and threatenings. Has Chriſt promiſed to abſolve and pardon all ſuch as truly repent them of their ſins? Has he promiſed to beſtow upon us an immortal crown of glory, and a kingdom that ſhall have no end? Then we may ſafely rely upon his word, ſince he, who has promiſed, is able to perform. He has power and authority to pardon all our ſins, to raiſe our dead bodies out of their graves, to make them incorruptible and glorious; and to introduce us into the preſence of the Almighty, at whoſe right hand there are pleaſures for evermore. And ſince he, who took upon him the human nature, in order to die for us, and reconcile us to God, has power to do it; ſince he who has promiſed us this great Salvation, has the diſpoſal of all things in his own hands; is not this a ſufficient motive to us, to be ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; foraſmuch as we know that our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord?

Another reaſon why the man Chriſt Jeſus, who is the Saviour of the world, ſhould be the judge of it is this, that this important office thus conferred upon him, is a ſuitable reward for his infinite condeſcenſion, in aſſuming the human nature, and becoming an expiatory ſacrifice for a ſinful world. "Great is the myſtery of "Godlineſs, God manifeſt in the fleſh." It was with no other view, but to ſave us from death, and the eternal puniſhment juſtly due to our demerits, that he came down into the world, and dwelt among us. "Though he was in the form of God, ſays St. Paul, "and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet he made "himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, "and was made in the likeneſs of man; and being found in faſhion "as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death,

"even

" even the death of the Croſs." Though our Bleſſed Saviour condeſcended, in this miraculous manner, to conceal his divinity under ſo mean a form; though he ſubmitted to lead ſuch an obſcure life, to be treated with all the marks of ignominy and contempt; and, at laſt, to die upon a Croſs between two malefactors; and endure all this for the paternal love which he bore to mankind; yet it was highly requiſite, that there ſhould be a time, when the ſun of righteouſneſs ſhould be no longer eclipſed, and that he ſhould at laſt break forth with a double luſtre. The world cannot but be conſcious of the greatneſs and excellency of the perſon who thus condeſcended to viſit them, to be deſpiſed and rejected by them, and to be a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with griefs; but for that very reaſon, Chriſt is now exalted to the right hand of his father, as a fitting recompence for his humiliation, and taking upon him the infirmities of human nature, and ſhines in his true glory; but then that pomp and ſplendor, in which he appears at preſent, is conſpicuous only to the bleſſed inhabitants of the heavenly manſions. Thoſe who treated him with all the marks of contempt and deriſion, who were the implacable enemies of him and his diſciples, and who, in ſhort, were actually concerned in the crucifixion of the one, and the perſecution of the others, after his deceaſe; thoſe, in a word, who long ſince have treated him with almoſt equal contempt, and have openly violated his moſt holy laws, and contemned his worſhip, have no ſenſe or idea at preſent of the majeſty and glory of the incarnate God; but when he comes to judge both the quick and the dead, at the laſt day, then his eternal majeſty and divine power will be diſplayed in its full luſtre; then all ſhall ſee it with wonder and amazement. Now the firm perſuaſion, that Chriſt is the man, ordained by God to judge the world at the laſt day, puts an end to the ſcandal and reproach of the Croſs; though a few wretches may deride a crucified God, and his

interceſſion for us; yet I am fully perſuaded, that we are not among the number of thoſe, that will be aſhamed to pay the tribute of adoration to him, who ſuffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, for this reaſon, among many others, becauſe God hath raiſed him from the dead, and hath made him both Lord and Chriſt.

Another reaſon why the man Chriſt Jeſus ſhould be ordained to judge both the quick and the dead, is this, namely, that it gives a great advantage to the future judgment. For the very appearance of the Son of Man for that purpoſe, muſt convince all mankind of the juſtice and equity of the laſt judgment.

If we ourſelves might have been indulged in the free choice of the perſon to be appointed for the judge of the whole earth, could we have deſired any thing more, than the perſon ſo choſen ſhould in all reſpects be a juſt and good man? It is an awful and tremendous thing to be judged by God himſelf; for who is ſo pure who is ſo preſumptuous as to approach his awful Tribunal? "He "chargeth his angels with folly, and the heavens are not clean in "his ſight." We have ſome ground, however, to expect a more favourable judgment from a man, who has ſhewn a peculiar regard to the human nature, who is conſcious of all its infirmities, and the numerous temptations to which it is expoſed.

And to all this, we have not only a man, but an incarnate God, a God perſonally united to our nature, to be the judge both of the quick and the dead. And ſince God has taken upon him the form of a man, and is ordained to be our judge, if either the one or the other is able to help us, we are abſolutely ſafe; no one has any juſt reaſon to entertain a formidable idea of ſo indulgent a judge, who has not been ſuch an obſtinate and perverſe ſinner, as that the mercies of a God, or the compaſſions of a Man cannot poſſibly reach him.

Though

Though it be thus happy for all truly penitent ſinners, that the man Chriſt Jeſus is to be their judge, and I hope, that all here preſent will endeavour, by their ſincere contrition for their paſt miſcarriages, and by an immediate reformation, to be entitled to his favour and indulgence; yet leſt there ſhould be any among us inſenſible of the danger of delaying their repentance to an advanced age, or till the time of their languiſhing on a ſick bed; give me leave to cloſe this diſcourſe with repreſenting to you, in a few words, how tremendous a thing it muſt certainly be, to hear the man Chriſt Jeſus, pronounce his final ſentence of condemnation upon thoſe miſerable wretches who preſumed to defy his threatenings, and to die in their ſins. How tumultuous muſt the thoughts of ſuch ſinners be at that awful day! How muſt they then ſtand agaſt, and ſelf-convicted! What agonies of guilt and deſpair muſt they then labour under! How ſhall they be able to bear the thought, that the day of grace was loſt by their own folly and preſumption! The very idea of it muſt amaze and confound them. How deep muſt the reflection of their being rejected by their Saviour ſink into their ſouls! Will not ſuch a perſon be apt to break out into exclamations of this nature?—"Had I not been wanting to myſelf, I had been entitled to the mercy of my judge and Saviour! Was he, who has now conſigned me to the manſion of eternal darkneſs, nailed upon a Croſs to ſave me from eternal deſtruction? Did he lay down his precious life to purchaſe for me an immortal, and never fading crown of glory; and does he now conſign me to a place of torment? And is the terrible ſentence pronounced againſt me the ſole reſult of my own demerits? Wretch that I am!"—What agonies, what horror, what confuſion and deſpair muſt accompany ſuch reflections as theſe, are too ſtrong to be well conceived, and altogether impoſſible to be expreſſed by the moſt comprehenſive words!

God,

God, therefore, of his infinite mercy grant, through the intercession of his dearly-beloved Son, who is our Saviour, and is ordained to be our judge, that none of us may feel those bitter pangs; but on the other hand, may hear, with ineffable joy at the last day, his comfortable invitation of the Righteous, and I hope of all here present amongst that happy number, namely, "Come ye blessed "children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you "from the foundation of the world." Amen.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY XLIX.

The great Solemnity of the Day of Judgment.

REVELATION XX. 11, 12.

AND I SAW A GREAT WHITE THRONE, AND HIM THAT SAT ON IT, FROM WHOSE FACE THE EARTH AND THE HEAVEN FLED AWAY, AND THERE WAS FOUND NO PLACE FOR THEM.—AND I SAW THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STAND BEFORE GOD; AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED: AND ANOTHER BOOK WAS OPENED, WHICH IS THE BOOK OF LIFE: AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED OUT OF THOSE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS.

EVERY Attempt to deſcribe the great ſolemnity of the day of judgment muſt have been deemed deſperate and vain had the ſacred ſcriptures been ſilent on that awful event; but ever-bleſſed be the God of mercy, the books of wiſdom and of truth are always open to the pious inquirer; they are, moreover, an inexhauſtible fountain of divine knowledge flowing with pure and unſullied ſtreams, from the remoteſt ages of the world even to theſe our times, to the inexpreſſible comfort of all nations, languages, and people. The paſſages in the old and new Teſtament which allude to that general

day

day of retribution when the ſon of man ſhall come in his glory and all his holy angels with him, being innumerable, we cannot fail of ample materials for ſerious meditations on that truly intereſting ſubject.

Saint John, in his REVELATION, was impreſſed with ſo ſtrong and lively an idea of the great and awful appearance of the day of judgment, that he deſcribes it with almoſt as much exactneſs and punctuality, as if the ceremony of it had been long ſince paſt, and he actually an eye witneſs of the ſolemn and pompous manner in which it was performed. " I ſaw, ſays he, a great white throne, " and him that ſat on it; from whoſe face the earth and the heavens " fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I ſaw " the dead, ſmall and great, ſtand before God, and the books were " opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: " and the dead were judged out of thoſe things which were written " in the books, according to their works."

" The trumpet ſhall ſound, ſays St. Paul, and the dead ſhall be " be raiſed."—This doubtleſs will be the firſt alarming circumſtance.—Either ſome divine univerſal virtue, or the voice of ſome mighty angel crying, Ariſe ye dead and come to judgment. Hear ye that voice—" I am Alpha and Omega,—the firſt and the laſt." —It is full of majeſty and terror; it is more loud than fame, and more general than the light of heaven. It is heard at both the poles, in the earth, and ſea, and air, and all deep places. Attend, attend, ye ſons of Adam! ye that are afar off, and ye that are near; —ye that began with the infant world, and ye that lived in its lateſt periods;—ye that freeze under the uncomfortable north—and ye that are hid under the remoteſt ſouth:—Ye that dwell in the temperate and lightſome regions, and ye that are ſcorched with the burning heats of the line:—Ye that only cried and ceaſed to breathe; —and ye that went ſlowly and late to the grave:—Ye that are alive —and ye that have been ages under ground:—Hearken! hearken!

to the proclamation of the great king—the prince of glory,—the judge of angels and of men.—The day—the day of recompence and vengeance is come!—The day of terrors and of triumphs! The night is paſt, ariſe ye dead! Ceaſe ſleeping in your grave!—Gather up your ſcattered parts, ſummon your thoughts together and make up your accounts. The tribunal is ſet, the judge is coming!—Ye living inhabitants, lay by your deſigns, let fall your traffic; quit your pleaſures and purſuits:—the time for theſe is done—for ever done—Eternity is in view!—Trim your lamps, the bridegroom is at the door!—"The trumpet ſounds—the dead ſhall be raiſed."—Behold! the cloſeſt vaults throw away their coverings, and diſcloſe the proud families that lay hid in that ſtately darkneſs! See how the looſe earth moves about the cloyſters of the dead, and the grave opens all its doors to enlarge its priſoners: when lo! a numerous people riſeth from under ground to attend the great aſſize of angels and of men!—They ariſe, but are not yet alive;—death ſtill ſits upon their faces clad in dread and paleneſs. They loſe that motion with aſtoniſhment which they gained with their reſtored parts; and are ready to be ſhaken into their former duſt, by the fear that hath ſeized their unſettled joints. They wonder at the light, and at themſelves, and are ready to drop back into their graves with terror.

See here the MIGHTY ſits trembling by his monument undelighted with the vain epithets it gave to his flattered memory. See there the DELICATE ſighs with his firſt breath, willing to return to darkneſs rottenneſs and worms, rather than to the light that will diſcover the guilt and the follies of a life of vanity and ſin. The HYPOCRITE droops to conſider that his painting and his ſhame are to be brought out of the night and ſilence of the grave, into ſorrow and open day. The VOLUPTUARY, dies again to think that he hath taken up his body from one death to carry it to another, and a worſe.—All mankind are equally diſtant from, and all ſtand

upon a level before their awful judge. He that weeps in the corners of the ſtreets, ſhall be heard as ſoon as the proud Lord that lives in luxury and pomp. He that toiled at the oar, as ſoon as the commander of legions.—And the poor man that followed the plough, ſhall have as much right done him as the mighty ſovereign that ſat upon the Throne.

The righteous ſhall awake with vigour in their ſouls, and life in their eyes; with gaiety in their looks, and tranſports in all their powers. Their new warmed blood moves pleaſantly in its ancient channels, and the reſtored ſpirits dance in the renewed veins. They are glad to meet the old companion of their pleaſures and their miſeries,—rejoicing at its reſcue from the infamous diſhonours of corruption and that it is ready to paſs with them into their promiſed and long expected glories.—Theſe are the firſt fruits, and the full crop is near, and their joy is beyond the joy of harveſt:—but we muſt leave the degree to be imagined, ſeeing it cannot be deſcribed.

The univerſal world both of the wicked and the righteous ſhall appear on the ſolemn ſummons. "And I ſaw, ſays St. John, the "dead ſmall and great ſtand before God." The earth,—the air,—the ſea, ſhall give up their dead. Adam and the Patriarchs, and all the antient ſages with their ſons to the lateſt poſterity, ſhall ſtand up together before the judgment ſeat. For all are ſubjects of the ſame general Empire, and all are accountable for their actions to the ſame ſovereign judge—namely, Jeſus Chriſt, who is ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and the dead. "Behold, ſays "St. Paul, I ſhew you the myſtery; we ſhall not all ſleep, but we "ſhall all be changed,—in a moment,—in the twinkling of an "eye,—at the laſt trump. For the trumpet ſhall ſound,—and the "dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, and we ſhall be changed."

One very affecting circumſtance of the terror with which the wicked will be diſmayed upon that great ſolemnity is this, that it will come upon them unawares; at a time when they little expect it:

it: the day of the Lord will come, as we are told in the ſacred ſcriptures, like a thief in the night; the laſt age ſhall ſtand as much aſtoniſhed at the conflagration of the world, as that of Noah did, when the whole face of the earth was covered with the waters. They will then be taken up in as eager a purſuit after the pleaſures and profits, the buſineſs and amuſements of life, as ever they were before; and when they have accompliſhed, as they imagine, the ends they propoſed, when they ſhall ſay to themſelves, we are now at peace, and in a ſtate of proſperity, then ſhall the fatal day ruſh in upon them on a ſudden, like an impetuous torrent, and overwhelm them with a ſwift and irreſiſtible deſtruction. When the man of pleaſure is gratifying his ſenſual appetites, at the expence of every ſocial virtue; when the ambitious man is graſping at exorbitant power, by tyranny and oppreſſion; when the miſer is accumulating immenſe riches, by uſurious contracts, and grinding the poor; then they will ſee all their revels and licentious amuſements, all their towering hopes and expectations, all their ill-gotten treaſures at one inſtant abſolutely loſt and ſwallowed up in the general devaſtation. Whilſt the atheiſtical free-thinkers of that day ſhall be making their profane and ludicrous reflections on the creation of the world; whilſt they ſhall be laughing and making a mock at the awful prediction of its final conflagration, they ſhall then have an unexpected, a ſelf-evident proof of it, and ſtand convicted with horror and amazement. For we do not find in any part of the ſacred ſcriptures, that mankind will have the leaſt previous notice of this wonderful revolution; there will be no uncommonly alarming events, no viſible decay in nature, no apparent ſymptoms of the world's approaching diſſolution; the ſun and moon will rule the day and night as uſual, the ſeaſons will maintain their ſtated courſe, and the world will, to all outward appearance, ſeem likely to laſt for many generations; nature, however, though thus ſeemingly vigorous and in her bloom,

though thus gay, and freſh complectioned, ſhall all on a ſudden ſicken, droop, and die. Now, all misfortunes, of what nature or kind ſoever, are the greater, as they are inſtantaneous, and altogether unthought of; becauſe, under ſuch circumſtances, a man has no time for recollection, no opportunity of being upon his guard; his reaſon is too far wounded to be capable of taking a clear and diſtinct view of the nature and extent of the impending ruin; ſo that to his confuſed imagination, it ſeems altogether boundleſs. And that which is ſtill a very aggravating circumſtance is this, that men have frequently very juſt grounds to conclude, that ſuch calamities might, by prudence and precaution, have been foreſeen and timely prevented; and muſt therefore be conſcious to themſelves, that their ſurpriſe is wholly owing to their own ill conduct. If then the common and obvious calamities to which we are daily expoſed are made more irkſome and heavy, by their falling upon us unawares, how muſt the terrors of that day be aggrandized by ſuch a general conflagration, as that which we are now ſpeaking of, when the form of all things will appear hideous and frightful; when the earth and the heaven ſhall flie away and there be no place found for them.

How will the careleſs and ungodly world be appalled and aſtoniſhed at that unlooked for ſummons! How will the dark Gentiles that never heard of ſuch a day;—and the hardened infidels that heard but did not believe; and the diſſolute ſpirit that heard, and believed, but did not conſider; how will they tremble and be confounded at the dread preparations of that hour? We ſhall then ſee the pale looks,—the ſhivering motions,—the gazing eye and liſtning ear,—the diſtracted face and trembling hand of the moſt proud and daring ſinner.—The drunkard lets fall his cup—and the buſy worldling ſtands at gaze. The loud companions are huſhed into ſilence, and the ſleepy ſot ſtarts up into anxious wonder.—After this firſt amazement how will the trembling multitude run diſtracted

ted up and down; ſome into corners to cover, others into companies to conſult: every man aſking his neighbour what is to be done? And he again repeating the queſtion to every one that is next unto him. The ſon runs to his amazed father, who needs the advice his dear child ſeeks. The wife claſps about her aſtoniſhed huſband that is as helpleſs as his frighted conſort. The publican begs counſel of the Phariſee—and he, poor ſoul, is as much at a loſs as the reprobate. They all court the mountains to cover them, and ſhuffle into caverns to hide them from the preſence of the judge. But alas! they quickly ſee the vanity of thoſe naked retreats, and find themſelves as much expoſed in the cloſeſt vaults as they would be in the body of the ſun. Mountains are but cobweb coverings, and rocks and earth but as a Cyprus viel. Hills, caves, and all are his whom theſe diſmayed fugitives would avoid. What ſhall they do, whither ſhall they go? They cannot bear his preſence, and they cannot evade it: the light kills, and the darkneſs will not hide.—For the darkneſs is no darkneſs to this judge.—The darkneſs and the day to him are both alike.—Thus will the wicked be confounded by the coming of the great and terrible day, and moſt of all thoſe that lived under the plain and frequent warnings of it. Had they never heard of this ſolemn time, they would have been afrighted indeed—but not ſo much aſtoniſhed;—it would have then been their wonder, but not ſo much their miſery. Had they not been told of this great appearance, and this judge, they might have looked on that majeſty without thoſe ſad degrees of dread, and ſuch mortal ſhiverings, and hoped for great abatements in conſideration of their fatal ignorance.—But alas! they were told of this day earneſtly and often. The God of all the world, and the judge of all, acquainted them with this great ſolemnity while it was in future.—The preachers of the goſpel were moſt urgent—preſt the truth of theſe things upon their faith and affections with all the evidence and importunity

tunity, ſuitableneſs of addreſs and accommodation to their reaſon and their intereſt; with all the motives of hope and fear, and all the incentives that are wont to move reaſonable natures:—They heard but did not heed.—They heeded perhaps a little, but forgot the next moment. If they aſſented—they ſlept;—if they were awakened, they ſunk again into a careleſs ſlumber.

The appearance at this great ſolemnity will be nothing leſs than that of univerſal mankind. This circumſtance will add very much to the pomp and grandeur of this great day of retribution. In order to make this numberleſs concourſe of the ſons of Adam ſtill more conſpicuous, it is highly probable that all ſuch as have any relation, correſpondence, or engagements with each other, whilſt in the land of the living;—all ſuch as have indulged or offended, ſeduced or reclaimed their neighbours ſhall be planted or ranged in ſuch a manner as to be within view, and be brought to a reacquaintance one with another. And ſhould that be the caſe, where will the ſinner and ungodly appear?—How will the oppreſſor be ſtruck with horror when the injured and helpleſs, whom he has without mercy cruſhed, as it were, to pieces, and robbed of their right, ſhall confront him! With what ſhame and confuſion of face muſt all thoſe ſtand, who have reviled and calumniated their neighbours without a cauſe, or have betrayed the truſts, which have been repoſed in them; when they ſhall be obliged to make their perſonal appearance before thoſe whom they have thus ſhamefully traduced, thus inhumanly injured and deſtroyed! What diſagreeable companions muſt all ſuch be at their ſecond interview, who have countenanced and encouraged one another in the commiſſion of the inhuman barbarities! Who have been ſons of violence, and have ſacrificed, not only large populous cities, but whole kingdoms to their unbounded luſt of power! How will the Alexanders and Cæſars, the Neros and Domitians of the earth ſtand agaſt, when whole armies and nations of murdered men ſhall ſurround them, and cry aloud for juſtice!

And

And as, on the one hand, this ſolemn meeting will be thus dreadful to the ungodly; how comfortable a ſight will it be, on the other, to the righteous, to meet with ſuch as were once naked, but were cloathed by them, ſick and in priſon, and were viſited by them! How great muſt the ſatisfaction of thoſe be, who have opened the eyes of the blind, and recovered them from a ſtate of ignorance and error! Who have reſcued their friends from the ſons of violence, or the mercileſs hands of the tyrant and oppreſſor!

Another very awful circumſtance of this great day will conſiſt in the majeſty of him before whom we ſhall be ſummoned. When our bleſſed Lord was firſt manifeſt in the fleſh, and aſſumed our nature; when he came down from the throne of his father to make atonement for the ſins of mankind, he condeſcended to live in a ſtate of obſcurity, and at laſt to die a painful and ignominious death, even the death of the croſs, for our ſalvation: but at the time appointed for the deſtruction of the world by fire; on the day fixed for his execution of judgment, in order to be a terror to all evil-doers, and a praiſe and glory to all ſuch as have done well; when he ſhall come to avenge his own and his adherents cauſe; he will then appear in all his grandeur, and be attended, in ſuch a manner as will be agreeable, in every reſpect, to the dignity of his office. He himſelf has been pleaſed to inform us, in what ſplendor he propoſes to ſhine, when he ſhall make his ſecond deſcent; when he ſhall come in the glory of his father, accompanied with an infinite hoſt of holy angels. At that time, we are told, he will deck himſelf with light, as with a garment, and be cloathed with majeſty and honour. At that time, he will make his publick appearance in all the pomp and magnificence of heaven; the Archangels, and all the other celeſtial intelligences, ſhall be ranged in their hierarchal order, and diſplay the luſtre of

their

their exalted natures. And though at his firſt coming he thought proper to have none of thoſe powers to attend him, yet at his ſecond he will have legions to wait upon him. "Thouſands of thou-"ſands, ſays the prophet Daniel, ſhall miniſter unto him, and ten "thouſand times ten thouſand ſtand before him." Then his appearance will be every way ſuitable to the grandeur and majeſty of the king of heaven. His glory will then ſhine forth with ſuch inconcievable luſtre, that all nature will ſink under his preſence, and be melted away with his refulgent brightneſs. The repreſentation of it, as St. John, has given it us in our text, runs thus, "I ſaw, ſays he, "a great white throne, and him that ſat on it; from whoſe face the "earth and the heavens fled away, and there was no place found for "them." And if this be the caſe, as doubtleſs it will, we may very well join with the prophet, and ſay, "who may abide the day of "his coming, and ſtand at his appearing?"

Moreover, at that great day every one will receive according to what he has done, whether it be good or evil. "Shall the judge of all "the earth do wrong?" Where the judge is above influence and has power to maintain his definitive ſentence, there it muſt be abſolutely impoſſible that juſtice ſhould fail.

Our bleſſed Lord is perfectly well acquainted with the circumſtances of all ſuch as he intends to judge. He who made all things, and by whom all things conſiſt, needs not that any ſhould teſtify of man; for he knows what is in man; "he is about our "paths, and about our beds, and ſpies out all our ways; he under-"ſtands our thoughts afar off." His eyes are upon us, though we are out of the ſight of all mankind; though in the darkeſt corner of the earth, or the moſt remote retirement; for all things are naked and open to him, with whom we have to do. He tries our hearts, and ſearches out our ſpirits; ſo that, if there be the leaſt pollution in them, he cannot but know it, and it will be altogether im-

poſſible

poſſible to conceal any wickedneſs from the God who liveth for ever and ever.

The practice of virtue and vice is frequently miſtaken in this world. As, on the one hand, innocence and integrity are too often miſrepreſented by ignorance and malice; as the moſt unblameable conduct is too often obſcured by prejudice and prepoſſeſſion; ſo, on the other, things that are really in themſelves black and ſcandalous, are varniſhed over with a ſpecious appearance. The moſt fulſome adulation is too often termed friendſhip and good-nature; the moſt inſufferable pride lies concealed under the deluſive title of courage and intrepidity; ambition paſſes frequently for zeal, and intereſt is honoured with the name of religion; hypocriſy has too many veils; and it is one of the hardeſt things in nature to pry into the qualities of actions, and to ſound the bottom of men's intentions. At the laſt day, however, the ſecrets of all hearts will be revealed, and every one will make his appearance, as he really is, without the leaſt fallacy or illuſion; and as the virtuous will then no longer lie under the laſh of envy and detraction; as all ſcandalous and unjuſt aſperſions will then be wiped away, and the righteous will ſhine like the ſun in the kingdom of his father; ſo thoſe who are hypocrites will be detected, and the vicious appear objects of contempt and abhorrence. All pious frauds will then be laid open, and Satan will no longer be ſuffered to aſſume the habit of an angel of light. For, as this judge is omniſcient, nothing can eſcape his all-ſeeing eye. He that would judge the world in righteouſneſs, and reward every one according to his works, muſt therefore have a comprehenſive knowledge of all things relating to human actions. Now, to ſtate the actions of men rightly, all their powers and purpoſes, their habits and diſpoſition, muſt be perfectly known. An infallible judgment therefore is abſolutely neceſſary to paſs a definitive ſentence upon the whole race of mankind, and determine their eternal happineſs or miſery, according to the ſtricteſt laws of juſtice. So

that it is evident, no finite underſtanding, no judgment, leſs infallible than that of God Almighty himſelf, is capable of diſcharging ſo important an office.

And as this judge of all the earth is omniſcient, ſo he is abſolutely impartial and unbiaſſed: he will never condemn the innocent, or acquit the guilty. Every one will have final ſentence paſſed upon him according to the merits of his cauſe. Earthly judges are ſubject to many imperfections, and have ſometimes too ſelf-intereſted views to hold the ſcale of juſtice even; but the great judge of all the earth is incapable of doing wrong; he is the fountain and foundation of all righteouſneſs, and, as ſuch, proportions his value and regard for every thing according to its intrinſic merit; and as his nature and inclination leads him to the impartial diſtribution of juſtice, ſo he can have no motives to induce him to act inconſiſtent with himſelf. We can beſtow nothing upon him, neither can we poſſibly deprive him of any thing he enjoys. His ſelf-ſufficiency makes him everlaſtingly happy, and conſequently, no fear, on the one hand, or advantage, on the other, can give the leaſt check to his final ſentence: and his omnipotence ſecures him from all fears of having his judgment reverſed; ſo that he has no inducement to comply with any foreign inclination, or follow the dictates of any one's reaſon but his own. And although this impartial judge of all the earth is beneficent to every man, and his mercy is over all his works; though tenderneſs and indulgence, though pity and compaſſion are his darling attributes; yet there is no juſt reaſon for any one to rely wholly upon them; ſince he will never ſtretch them ſo far as to treſpaſs on his juſtice. He will not break his own laws to make thoſe happy who have bid defiance to his power, have turned a deaf ear to his counſel, and would have none of his reproof: ſince they have abuſed his bleſſings, and neglected the means of ſalvation; ſince neither his promiſes, on the one hand, nor his menaces, on the other; ſince, in ſhort, neither his

his mercies nor his judgments could work any manner of change or reformation in them, he will mock at their calamity, and laugh when their fear cometh. What, therefore, a man ſows, that muſt he alſo expect to reap.—And as the reſolutions of an omnipotent and impartial judge muſt of neceſſity be juſt; ſo neither can they ever fail of having their due effect.—When Chriſt ſhall aſcend again at the laſt day, when he ſhall whet his glittering ſword, and his hand ſhall take hold of judgment, he will then render vengeance to all thoſe that hate him. However, as our bleſſed Saviour will be an impartial and awful judge to the wicked; ſo will he be a merciful and loving judge to all thoſe who uſe their utmoſt endeavours, how imperfect ſoever they may be, to love and obey him. He will not proceed with rigour againſt any of us, who ſincerely repent of our evil ways, nor paſs ſentence of condemnation upon us, for not performing up to the higheſt pitch of human ſtrength. He will make ſome allowance for the infirmities of nature, and the diſadvantages we labour under: he knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but duſt; as, therefore, a father pities his own children, ſo will the Lord be merciful to thoſe that fear him.

To conclude,—ſince there will come a day, and how ſoon we know not, in which the ſecrets of all hearts will be revealed; how ought we to avoid doing any thing againſt the dictates of our own conſciences, or any thing that will not ſtand the ſevereſt teſt! For when the right of the judgment day ſhall thoroughly awaken a careleſs world—muſt not the ſinner burſt into ſtrains of anguiſh like to theſe?

"Brutiſh ſoul! Where was thy reaſon? Where was thy ſelf-
"love? Where was thy reflections? Where was thy providence?
"Couldeſt thou not look beyond this world—or didſt thou ſee, and
"yet wouldeſt betray me into this danger—this miſery? Was the
"ſordid fleſh a better friend than that triumphant Jeſus? Or the
"world an enjoyment like thoſe rewards he will now diſpence?

" Were thy pleaſures comparable to the tranſports of the happy " expectants of this time? Or thy little policies of equal moment " with the affairs of this day? O! how ſhall I anſwer this judge? " What ſhall I ſay to the black indictment that lies againſt me? " Why did I abuſe his love? and diſregard his promiſes?—Why " did I ſlight his threatenings, throw of his eaſy yoke, and chooſe " darkneſs, death and miſery, before light and life, and glory? What " can I ſay to my judge? Hover over me ſhame and bluſhing! " Yea, let death hide, and everlaſting darkneſs caſt its covering upon " me.—Alas! death will not befriend one that hath ſo ſad a reaſon " to ſeek him, and darkneſs flies away from yon glorious preſence. " —Mercy is at an end and pardon is no more.—Excuſes are in " vain—the judge is juſt—but inexorable—not to be moved by " fond pity, nor biaſſed by weak affections.—He will no more " ſhew favours to thoſe who ſo long have ſlighted them; nor " will he have mercy upon thoſe, who would have none upon " themſelves." Such reflections of anguiſh and deſpair as theſe, that awful day will occaſion in the wicked, and be the beginnings to them of a ſad eternity.

But then—the tranſports of the faithful will be unſpeakable on that day,—when they ſhall exchange the doleful tone of—how long!—How long, O Lord!—for the pleaſant voice,—he is come!—He is come! How will the nimble ſpirits play in the ſmiling eyes that languiſhed and drooped before? And all the lovers of the holy Jeſus that were as melancholy as winter's gloom, awaken into chearfulneſs and vigour: joy warms the cold and lifeleſs blood and ſends it with a pleaſant thrill through all the channels of its motion; and the enkindled ſpirit is ready to melt the groſs maſs that detains it from the adorable object of its love.

" O my ſoul! ſaith the tranſported admirer,—how reaſonable " was thy faith, and how unjuſt thy fears? How ſmall were the troubles

" troubles of thy night, to the pleaſures of this day?—And how " injurious were thy complaints to ſo glorious an expectation? O " bleſſed fears that end in ſuch triumphs! O pleaſant ſorrow that " ends in rapture." Such, and incomprehenſibly greater will be the extaſies of the faithful, in the day when the judge ſhall appear.

Shall we delay then to make it our care and buſineſs to prepare for this awful ſolemnity? We are probationers here for another ſtate and the day of judgment is the great time of trial for it.—As we are found then, our condition will be for ever, and according as our actions have been—the ſentence will paſs, either to everlaſting joy or endleſs woe.—What remains but that we look on this as our great and moſt neceſſary work.—That we have the future judgment always in our eye and thoughts.—That we ſtudy the laws whereby we are to be judged.—That we frequently judge ourſelves, and that we order our actions by the directions and example of our bleſſed Lord. And if we thus prepare,—that day which will be ſo dreadful to the wicked, will be the moſt delightful one to us we ever ſaw, and the beginning of an everlaſting day of glory, that hath no night of ſorrow to ſucceed it. For at the concluſion of the judgment we ſhall paſs with the judge to thoſe regions of bliſs and triumph where we are to dwell with him to eternal ages, ſinging Hallelujahs to God the Father—God the Son—and God the Holy Ghoſt—to whom be aſcribed by us and all his creatures, glory—honour—praiſe and adoration henceforth, and for ever. Amen.

SUNDAY L.

Religion the only conſiſtent Principle of ſocial Duty.

1 KINGS IV. 25.

AND JUDAH AND ISRAEL DWELT SAFELY, EVERY MAN UNDER HIS VINE AND UNDER HIS FIG-TREE, FROM DAN EVEN TO BEERSHEBA, ALL THE DAYS OF SOLOMON.

THE fact which is here ſet forth is recorded by the ſacred hiſtorian, without aſſigning the particular cauſes that produced it. And though there is great reaſon to conclude, that the profound peace the kingdom of Solomon enjoyed, was partly owing to his extenſive power as a king, and partly to his more extenſive wiſdom as a legiſlator, yet is it by no means improbable to ſuppoſe, that neither his power, or his wiſdom, nor both together, would have produced ſuch truly valuable and delicious fruits, had not their powerful ſanctions been ſupported by the more powerful influence of piety and religion.—In confirmation of which Hypotheſis, it is remarkably to be obſerved, that notwithſtanding he remained, as we may ſuppoſe, poſſeſſed of his power and legiſlative wiſdom, yet when he forſook the paths of true religion, and gave himſelf up to all the abominations of idolatry, he laid the foundation of thoſe unhappy diviſions, which, after his death,

death, not only diſturbed, but entirely overturned, the tranquillity of his kingdom; for God had promiſed, that, for his ſervant David's ſake, theſe troubles ſhould not ariſe during the life of Solomon.

If extenſive empire abroad, and the impartial adminiſtration of public juſtice at home, could of themſelves ſecure the happineſs of a prince's reign, the annals of our own country might rival thoſe of Solomon's, in happineſs, ſecurity and peace.—Happy, however, as we doubtleſs are, comparatively with all thoſe nations that ſurround us, and happy as we muſt be acknowledged in ourſelves, when our paſſions will permit us to take an unprejudiced ſurvey of all the national bleſſings we may, and do, enjoy: can it nevertheleſs be thought too confident to aſſert, can the aſſertion be denied by any, but thoſe who make it neceſſary, "that if we had more religion we ſhould be happier ſtill?"—But if we give our thoughts a larger ſcope in enquiring, what influence religion and piety are likely to have on the peace and welfare of ſociety, we cannot, I am ſure, be convicted, in theſe our days, of being "inſtant out of "ſeaſon;" ſince it is too flagrant a truth to be denied, and too melancholy a fact to be dwelt upon with pleaſure, that ſuch are the unfavourable ſymptoms of corruption, in manners, as well as principle, the one unreſtrained by ſhame, the other uninfluenced by religion, that even candor itſelf muſt allow the reaſoning to be as ſeaſonable, as piety can wiſh it to be uſeful: and though the arguments that will be uſed ſhould fail of raiſing the ſinking credit of religion, and reſtoring ſociety to a ſtate of undiſturbed tranquillity, though they ſhould even fail of effecting either, they will, at leaſt, demonſtrate a good intention to accompliſh both.

Man, it is well known, can ſcarcely even ſubſiſt without ſociety: he is, therefore glad to ſubmit to ſome uncertain inconveniencies, to enjoy the certain benefits ariſing from it. And though the aſſiſtance he receives ſhould not be given from ſuch generous and diſin-

diſintereſted motives as it ought, and though he ſhould be ſecure from injuries by virtue of a principle inferior far to that of love and friendſhip, ſociety nevertheleſs, though its delights will be far from unalloyed, will yet retain ſufficient comforts to make it, at leaſt, comparatively good. For it may ſtill ſubſiſt, as it does among different merchants, from a ſenſe of its utility, without either mutual affection or eſteem; and though no man in it ſhould owe any obligation, or be bound in gratitude to any other, yet it may ſtill be upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices, according to an agreed and ſtipulated valuation, without either kindneſs on the one hand, or gratitude on the other.

But though upon theſe principles, low and degenerate as they are, ſociety, it is true, might ſtill ſubſiſt, yet it never could riſe to that exalted pitch of perfection, which it ever will arrive at, when it flouriſhes under the reciprocal influence of love, of juſtice, of gratitude, and eſteem.--If theſe exalted virtues then are acknowledged neceſſary to make the comforts of ſociety complete, religion muſt be ſo too. For what other principle can offer equal inducements to purſue the practice of them with unabating cheerfulneſs and unremitting ardor, or what other principle can uſe ſuch threatening denunciations to reſtrain men from the licentious practice of their oppoſite vices? In vain will they pretend "to love mercy, "and to do juſtice, if they have not likewiſe learnt to walk humbly "with their God." Fruitleſs and vain would be the hope, to expect that the fear of puniſhment, or the dread of penal laws, would effectually controul the daring ſpirit of licentiouſneſs, without the ſacred aſſiſtance of religion, without the alarming apprehenſions of futurity. No: both the legiſlator and the laws would be laughed at, and ſet at defiance, if a ſuperior principle did not dictate reverence to the one, and obedience to the other. "For he who looks "no higher for the motives of his conduct, than the reſentments "of human juſtice, whenever he can preſume himſelf cunning

" enough to elude, rich enough to bribe, or ſtrong enough to reſiſt " it, will inſtantly ſet himſelf at liberty from every invidious re- " ſtraint that dares to oppoſe the full enjoyment of his will."

I know there have been, and no doubt ſtill are, men, who pretend to be the moſt ſcrupulous obſervers of, what they call, the duties of morality, without the leaſt tincture of piety and religion; and " it is the obſervance of the duties of morality, they will ſay, " that ſecures the happineſs of ſociety."—I grant it is, where that morality is the dictate of religion; but where it exiſts, if it ever can exiſt, without religion (which I much doubt) it will not, I fear, be productive of thoſe very extenſive bleſſings to mankind, which are ſo laviſhly, and ſo ſecurely, attributed to it. Virtue, in moſt of thoſe who ſo ſpeciouſly diſclaim all piety and religion, is a ſound, which ſupplies, indeed, a conſiderable part of their converſation, but it is dangerous to depend too much upon it in their practice; for thoſe who expect, or wiſh for, no other life, can have no fears to prevent their taking all advantages of this. And who can wonder if they do?

Beſides, if we examine ſome of theſe perfect characters that claim the merit of morality, while they diſclaim the influence of religion, ſhall we not generally find, that all their boaſted virtue conſiſts, like that of the Phariſees of old, " in being ſeen of men?" Shall we not find, that it is the love of public applauſe, or the fear of public cenſure, not a benevolence or rectitude of nature, that dictates their propriety of conduct? For could we be always near them, to ſcrutinize their actions in the unſeen moments of private life, could we retire behind that ſcene which every art has been employed to decorate, and every paſſion labours to illuminate, could we ſee their ſouls ſtripped of thoſe ſuperficial ornaments that make them glitter on the ſtage of public view, could we ſee hypocriſy without her maſk, and treachery and ſelf-intereſt without their cloke, ſhould we not too often find, that when the terrifying

eye

eye of the world was no more upon them, that honeſty of heart, which before appeared ſo ſolid in public, would, when examined in private, prove airy and unſubſtantial, would evaporate and diſappear "like the morning dew?" Should we not often find their private conduct ſo totally different from their public profeſſions, and what we had before heard ſo groſsly contradicted by what we ſhould then ſee, that there could be no occaſion to aſk ourſelves the queſtion, which of the two ſenſes we ſhould truſt?

Allowing, however, that this would not always be the conduct of every moral diſclaimer of religion, yet what ſecurity can you have that it would not? Chuſe yourſelf, for inſtance, out of the whole race of men, a ſteward, whoſe moral conduct ſtands fair and unimpeached, but who ſcruples not, at the ſame time, to diſavow the ſacred influence of religion. If you truſt your property to the care of this moral ſteward, what ſecurity have you that he will not defraud you of it?—It is true, perhaps, that he could ſeldom injure you, without running the riſque of ruining that character, by the unblemiſhed reputation of which he has lived with credit in the world.—I grant it; and here alone is your dependence.—For ſhould the circumſtances of the caſe be ſuch, which undoubtedly they often are, and ſometimes, perhaps, when they are leaſt ſuſpected to be ſo, that he could ſafely ruin you, without endangering his own public credit, in this caſe, where is your ſecurity?—Can you depend upon his conſcience? Alas! what is conſcience, when diveſted of principles of religion? It is nothing more than a regard to the eſteem and cenſure of the world, which, in the caſe before us, are entirely out of the queſtion.—The force of human laws, it is plain, can have no effect, where they cannot poſſibly take cognizance.—Intereſt then, all-powerful intereſt, which daily furniſhes ſuch melancholy demonſtrations of the truth of our Saviour's maxim, that "the children of this world are in their generation wiſer than "the children of light," will ſuperſede every other motive; and

becauſe the ſacred weight of religion is wanting to turn the balance in your favour, you muſt unavoidably ſubmit to become a wretched prey to remorſeleſs villainy, concealed under the artful veil of moral honeſty: which, you will then be convinced, is to ſociety, only as cyphers are in numeration; for though like them, it has been obſerved, it may make a ſuperficial appearance, yet in fact, it has, like them, no intrinſic value, till a ſenſe of religion, like the principal figure at the head, gives it weight, force, and ſignificance.

If proofs like theſe invalidate not the aſſertion, "that morality is "ſufficient for the extenſive purpoſes of ſociety," try it in ſtill more familiar circumſtances of life.—Try it upon your children; and inſtead of teaching them their duty to God, teach them only, if you can, their duty to their neighbour. Inculcate this in the ſtrongeſt terms you can invent, and paint the heinouſneſs of injuſtice in the moſt diſguſting colours: yet, if intereſt, or even luſt, when they grow up, ſhould aſk them, why they ſhould not be unjuſt, provided their injuſtice could be concealed, what principle can they have, powerful enough to counteract the arguments of two ſuch ungovernable tutors? No, you muſt not expect to gather the uncorrupted fruits of true religion from that tree, which has been watered only from the earthly ſpring of moral virtue, and not ſupplied from the heavenly ſtream of pure and undefiled religion. Well is it, if after all our moſt diligent care, after all the pious catechiſms of parents, governors, and tutors, it will bring forth fruits acceptable to God, uſeful to man, and profitable to its own ſalvation.

Diſobeyed by children, and betrayed by ſervants, try it again upon your friend. And what is friendſhip without honour? The ſource of the moſt exquiſite pains, of injuries the greateſt that can be felt; nay, greater ſometimes than can be endured.—But what is honour without religion? A cloke for perfidy, to betray the openneſs of ſincerity; a bond, whoſe obligation is leſſened by every new temptation, diſſolved by intereſt, and totally ſacrificed by want.

Were

Were we to extend our thoughts, from theſe particular ſcenes of private life, to the more public ſtage of general obſervation, we ſhould find, that the ſame reaſoning would hold good in regard to the collective body of the people, as with regard to every individual among them. Religion ever will, and nothing but religion ever can, infallibly controul the daring ſpirit of licentiouſneſs. And thoſe, whoſe aim or intereſt it is to diſturb the peace of ſociety, have only to diveſt the people of religious ſcruples, and the inglorious undertaking will, it is to be feared, be too ſucceſsful in the event.—Jeroboam himſelf, who ſtands upon record a diſtinguiſhed character of this kind, will bear indiſputable evidence to the truth of this aſſertion. No ſooner had the ten tribes of Iſrael revolted from Rehoboam, Solomon's ſon, than it immediately occurred to Jeroboam (to whom they had revolted) that "if they were once "ſuffered to go up to Jeruſalem to do ſacrifice in the houſe of the "Lord, their hearts would certainly turn again to Rehoboam, their "true and lawful king." To ſecure their attachment therefore to himſelf, which was founded on their rebellion to their prince alone, he was forced to call in the aſſiſtance of idolatry and falſe worſhip; well-knowing, that the repeated exerciſe of true religion would ſoon recall them to their civil duty, in utter excluſion of all his flattering and ambitious hopes.

In ſhort, take your account of the introduction of religion even from the infidel himſelf, and you will find, that at the very inſtant he is endeavouring to invalidate its bleſſed influence, he is driven to acknowledge that influence to be neceſſary. For he tells you, "it was the invention of political wiſdom for the good government "of mankind." The wiſdom of all ages, you ſee then has concurred in acknowledging, that government and ſociety could not long ſubſiſt without it. It might, indeed ſubſiſt, and ſo might any ſyſtem whatever, while there was no temptation to infringe its laws: but when temptation offers, and that, perhaps, in private too,

too, concealed from the curious and correcting eye of human inquiſition, to what can we apply to over-rule ſo ſtrong, and ſo irreſiſtible a biaſs, but to revealed religion, to a ſacred fear of that being, who knows what is done in ſecret, and to whoſe all-ſeeing eye darkneſs and light are both alike?—Nay, ſo univerſally have the enemies of religion been eſteemed the enemies of mankind, ſo natural is the tendency of infidelity to remove the moſt powerful motives to virtue, and, by corrupting the principles of individuals, to poiſon the ſprings of public peace, that even a falſe religion, among thoſe who never heard of the true, has always been thought a better ſecurity againſt the malevolence of man, than the moſt exalted precepts of morality.

We may boaſt, then, of the goodneſs and the regular execution of our laws, we may boaſt of the moſt excellent forms of juſtice that hiſtory can furniſh, and we may pride ourſelves in the bleſſing of ſeeing the higheſt ſeat thereof filled to the utmoſt wiſhes of every well meaning ſubject, yet, though theſe may defend us from the injuries of others, they will afford us no protection againſt thoſe more fatal injuries, which our paſſions and our vices bring upon ourſelves. Theſe, after all, are the only enemies to peace. And when theſe are once ſubdued, it requires but little ſkill in the knowledge of future events to propheſy, that in this and every other kingdom, "every man will dwell as ſafely under his vine and "under his fig-tree, as Judah and Iſrael did in the days of Solomon." But from whence is this infallible principle of national ſecurity to be drawn? It can only be drawn from the ſacred influence of the true religion of Jeſus Chriſt. For though the philoſopher may labour to prove, that his rule of right may be reduced to an active principle of duty; and though propriety of conduct may, in ſome degree, be kept up, among thoſe of liberal education by, what is called, the point of honour; yet nothing but religion can ever fix a ſettled ſtandard of behaviour among the lower ranks of men. "For the

" exalted ſpeculations of philoſophy are like thoſe coſtly orna-
" ments, and expenſive delicacies, which every man cannot com-
" mand, and, God be thanked, no man's neceſſities require; while
" plain and uſeful notions of religion are like our daily bread,
" which all muſt ſtand in need of, and which all may procure too
" by a moderate ſhare of labour and application."

Notwithſtanding, therefore, all the moſt eloquent harangues upon the abſtract beauty of virtue, in defence of the guard of honour, or the ſuppoſed ſufficiency of morality, yet, after all, we may ſtill maintain with confidence, what every day's experience will confirm, " that it is true religion, and true religion only, that can " ſecure the peace and happineſs, either of individuals, or ſociety." For when religion keeps the ſword of juſtice, though ſhe ſhould keep it ſheathed, yet will it be revered, far more revered, than when drawn by the wiſeſt legiſlator in defence of peace.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY LI.

Strictures concerning the Happineſs of Heaven.

REVELATION XIV. 13.

I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, SAYING UNTO ME, WRITE, BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD, FROM HENCEFORTH: YEA, SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS; AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.

ALTHOUGH the greateſt part of the numerous deſcendants from our firſt parents are long ſince departed out of this life, and viſible no more amongſt us; yet we muſt not therefore vainly imagine, that they ceaſe to exiſt: for their ſouls, though not encumbered with their bodies, are aſſuredly as much alive in the other world, as we are now exiſting in this; and as in this life ſome endure a long ſeries of pain and ſorrow, whilſt others enjoy a perfect and uninterrupted ſtate of health and proſperity; ſo it is with them likewiſe, but in an infinitely higher degree. For as ſome live in a ſtate of everlaſting bliſs; ſo others,—and as we have too juſt ground to fear,—very many,—live ſurrounded

with horrors in that deplorable place where darkneſs and deſpair hold their gloomy reign. But let us turn our thoughts from ſuch melancholy contemplations. Sure none of us are ſo loſt to all ſenſe of moral feeling as that nothing but the flames of hell can awaken us.—None of us ſo deſperately wicked, as that nought but the ſhrieks and yellings of damned ſpirits, and the torments of the infernal regions can terrify and affright us from our vices.—I hope, however, better things.—I no ways queſtion but that each individual perſon here preſent expects to dwell hereafter with bleſſed angels and glorified ſpirits, in an uninterrupted ſtate of reſt and felicity.

As no one can be certain how long or ſhort the time of his probation may be, let no one loſe the preſent hour. Bleſſed be God! we are all as yet in a capacity of working out our ſalvation, and we ſhall be greatly wanting to ourſelves if any of us ſhall unhappily fail in the attempt. Our all gracious and indulgent father plainly ſhews how ſolicitous he is that we ſhould live with him, and be happy for ever in the enjoyment of his preſence; ſince he is ſtill pleaſed to afford us all the means that he hath appointed for that purpoſe. Witneſs our ſolemn meetings here together to join in prayer to the divine goodneſs for his aid and comfort in our ſearch after eternal happineſs; and to be reminded of the courſe and method we are to purſue for the accompliſhment of ſo great and glorious an end. In truth, the mere deſire of embracing every opportunity that offers of being aſſiſted and directed in ſo important a work, is highly praiſe worthy. Can we then poſſibly employ our time better than in illuſtrating the bleſſedneſs of the righteous;—or as our text more ſtrongly expreſſes it, of the dead which die in the Lord. All ſuch good and holy perſons our inſpired Evangeliſt pronounces to be immediately bleſſed upon their departure out of this world. "Bleſſed ARE the dead, ſays he, "which die in the Lord."—And if that be the caſe they are happy indeed!

indeed!—They muſt be conſcious that they are ſo, for how can we with propriety call any being bleſſed that is not ſenſible of the happineſs it enjoys?

To give a lively and clear idea of thoſe pleaſures which God has reſerved for the recompence and reward of the righteous would be too difficult an attempt for the moſt elevated mortal uninſpired; for certain it is, that infinite wiſdom and goodneſs may with eaſe contrive ſuch inſtances of everlaſting felicity, as the heart of man cannot poſſibly conceive, and of which he can have no other than a very faint and imperfect idea, till his mortal frame ſhall have put on immortality, and till by that means he ſhall become duly qualified to enter the celeſtial manſions. However, as ſome knowledge, be it ever ſo imperfect, of thoſe ineffable joys may be ſuppoſed to quicken us in our ſpiritual warfare, ſober and ſerious reflections on that uninterrupted felicity which the almighty has declared ſhall be the everlaſting portion of the righteous, when they ſhall have arrived into his heavenly kingdom, muſt, doubtleſs,—if hearkened to with due attention,—have a very good effect on our future lives; for though our finite underſtandings are incapable of entertaining any perfect ideas of that infinite ſtate of bliſs; yet from the ſacred ſcriptures we may deduce ſuch a deſcription of their reality and eternal duration, as may give us a ſufficient ſatisfaction for the preſent; may ſerve to inflame our hearts with the moſt ardent devotion; and create in us a perfect thirſt and longing after immortality.

Thoſe who fix their faith on the veracity of the ſacred ſcriptures, cannot entertain the ſhadow of a doubt concerning the happineſs of good men after death.—"I heard a voice from heaven,—exclaims "the beloved Diſciple,—ſaying unto me, write, bleſſed are the dead "which die in the Lord, from henceforth. Yea, ſaith the ſpirit, "that they may reſt from their labours; and their works do follow "them."—This truth, reaſon, even without the help of Revelation,

hath ſtrongly pointed out to man, for no nation or people that we ever read or heard of as yet, were ſo loſt and bewildered in their reſearches after divine knowledge, as not to diſcern that the condition of the vicious in a future ſtate, would be very miſerable and that of the virtuous very happy. "Virtue, ſays Euripides—when any one "dies, is not deſtroyed, but lives, even after the diſſolution of the "body."—Similar notions to this may be gathered from the accounts we have of the moſt ſavage and barbarous kingdoms. But we, on whom the light of the goſpel has moſt glorioufly ſhined, have more certain intelligence of this heavenly Canaan. That there is ſuch a place we are certain, and we may aſſure ourſelves, that when we have indulged our fancies to the height; when we have warmed our imaginations with all the rapturous proſpects which our weak faculties can entertain any idea of,—that we are infinitely below the mark: that the joys whereof we have any conceptions, bear no more proportion to thoſe of heaven, than does the faint light of the ſmalleſt ſtar, when compared with the dazzling luſtre of the noon day ſun. Conſcious as we are of our great inability, we ſhall, notwithſtanding, venture to point out to you ſome few ſtrictures concerning the bleſſedneſs of thoſe which die in the Lord, and that we may not wander too far out of our way in this attempt, we ſhall carefully adhere to Revelation, or thoſe deſcriptions which the ableſt of our own Divines have formed from the inſpired writers of the ſacred volumes.

Not only our Text, but numberleſs other paſſages that are interſperſed throughout the Old and New Teſtament, demonſtrate, beyond all contradiction, that the moſt rapturous enjoyments which our natures are capable of here on earth, can bear no proportion to thoſe of another life; ſince the former, how exquiſite ſoever for a few moments, have yet a tincture in them of evil as well as good; of ſorrow as well as joy. So fluctuating and inconſtant are they, that we have no manner of ſecurity for their duration even of an hour;

hour; — they are like a ſhadow, and in a moment vaniſh out of ſight: — when we think ourſelves moſt ſafe in the poſſeſſion of them,—even then they glide from us we know not how, and too ſoon convince us of our folly and deluſion. Were the enjoyments, however, of this world ever ſo certain, yet the ſatisfaction that flows from them is far from being complete. Almoſt every occurrence in nature is capable of creating us uneaſineſs, but nothing we can do, nothing that can befal us, can give us any perfect or ſubſtantial pleaſure. It is hardly to be accounted for,—but either our appetites are ſo fantaſtical, or the good things of this life are ſuch illuſions, that we are never eaſy either with or without them. If we are hungry, we are in pain; but then if we indulge our appetites too far we are more in pain than we were before.---If we are poor, we look upon ourſelves as miſerable; and when we once attain thoſe treaſures which our ambition has been long graſping after, we, perchance, become leſs contented than we were before. In ſhort, the enjoyments of this life are ſo far from affording us any real and ſolid ſatisfaction, that the moſt alluring are moſt apt to create diſguſt. Now, on the contrary, the pleaſures of another life will not only give us ample ſatisfaction, but that ſatisfaction will never diminiſh; each repetition of them will be accompanied with a new pleaſure and contentment. "Bleſſed are the dead, which die in the Lord,"—that is, every good ſoul upon its departure out of this world, enters upon a ſtate of peace and quietneſs. The time of trial is in this life; the time of reward in the next. When it goes from hence the labours of its particular office and vocation are at an end. That care which was neceſſary to provide for and ſupport the poor ruinous tabernacle of this mortal body, will, on its diſſolution, be for ever over. The happy ſoul will then be ſet above the reach of all misfortunes. In that bleſſed region where it is planted, no tears are to be wiped away; no tongue ever attempted to complain,—no breaſt to ſwell with any diſconſolate ſighs. It is

delivered

delivered at once from all the infirmities and pains of the body to which it was before united; from the treachery and baſe deluſion of ſeeming friends, and from the perſecutions of open and malicious foes. Immediately on its departure, it perceives itſelf amongſt the bleſſed inhabitants of heaven; --- amongſt truer and more faithful friends than ever it met with before. Thoſe happy intelligences, we may imagine, are not altogether ſilent at their meeting with a new departed ſoul. We may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that they deliver a kind and endearing meſſage from the divine majeſty. That they make the anxious ſoul ſenſible of its being beloved of heaven, and of their coming to conduct it to the Lord Jeſus, its kind mediator and redeemer. We may ſuppoſe them uttering the tendereſt expreſſions imaginable: comforting the weary ſoul and entertaining it with high encomiums on its paſt diligence in well doing; on its invincible patience in ſuffering; its bold and ſteady oppoſition to the enemies of its ſalvation; and aſſuring it, that all its toils and fatigues are now for ever at an end; that its poverty ſhall redound to its wealth; that all its pains and diſappointments ſhall be turned to everlaſting pleaſures. The indulgent guides and glorious companions of its journey ſhall conduct it, in a very little time, to a place of endleſs bliſs; and ſcarce can it reflect on what they promiſe, before it finds itſelf in full poſſeſſion. We may ſuppoſe then, that they paſs with their beloved charge through all the regions of the viſible heavens, with ſuch a velocity as nothing in the material world can equal; and that the Paradiſe to which they tranſlate it, is a place ſerene and calm, beautiful and harmonious; where a bright and eternal day inceſſantly ſhines with a very great and pleaſing glory; a place ſupplied with every convenience, every pleaſure that the inhabitants can poſſibly wiſh for. This place has the beauty of an eternal ſpring, and the wealth and plenty of an everlaſting autumn. For ſince the Almighty has furniſhed 'this lower world,—which wicked as well as good men enjoy,—with ſo great an

an abundance, and with ſuch an admirable variety; ſince he cauſes his ſun to ſhine, and his fertile ſhowers to fall on the unjuſt as well as the juſt; what a glory, think you, will adorn, what a plenty of good things muſt we believe will fill that better world prepared for the righteous.—" If I myſelf or my departed friend,—a man may " ſay,—muſt in death forſake the moſt glorious palaces, the moſt " delightful proſpects, the moſt delicious retreats,—this place will " teach us to diſdain all that we have left below. This is the " happy kingdom prepared for all good men from the foundation " of the world; of which even the terreſtrial Paradiſe, in which " Adam and his happy Mate in their ſtate of innocence were firſt " planted, was but a very faint and imperfect reſemblance." The ſoul, when once arrived here, will never wiſh any more to return to the low dark miſerable earth again, but will be unſpeakably pleaſed to think that this will be its everlaſting habitation.

Preachers and Prophets, Apoſtles and Evangeliſts unanimouſly declare, that thoſe who die in the Lord ſhall bear an honourable reſemblance to the great creator of the world, and the ever adoreable Redeemer of mankind, many—very many, doubtleſs, will be the inhabitants of this earth at the conſummation of all things, but even they, we are told by Saint Paul, ſhall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the laſt trump. Similar to this account is that paſſage of the pſalmiſt where,—ſpeaking of the final happineſs of the ſaints, he exclaims—" when I awake, I ſhall be " ſatisfied with thy likeneſs." As we are rational creatures, compoſed of body and ſoul, God Almighty has made us capable of thoſe excellencies which are termed moral, and which in himſelf are infinite. How great our privilege then, to bear his moſt glorious image in this exalted particular! When we are kind and indulgent to our fellow creatures in this world, we are ſaid to be merciful, as our father, who is in heaven, is merciful. Theſe moral excellencies are the beauties of the ſoul, and render the ſpirits of juſt

juſt men made perfect all glorious within, as the improvements of their bodies render their appearance all charming without. And as theſe excellencies are the glory of the divine nature, they muſt of neceſſity reflect a great honour on thoſe happy ſaints, who are endowed with them; and in heaven the greater reſemblance we bear to God, the greater, doubtleſs, and more honourable muſt our accompliſhments be accounted. And can any thing be more happy, than to bear the image and likeneſs of that Being, who is the happieſt, and moſt perfect of all Beings? As the divine excellencies are to the Almighty an infinite bliſs;—for he is his own happineſs;—ſo this participation of them in the ſaints, after they are thus glorified, muſt of neceſſity make them happy likewiſe in proportion; and when theſe excellencies are conferred upon them in as high a degree of perfection as their capacities will admit of, they muſt of neceſſity be as happy as it is poſſible for them to be. And what raptures, what tranſporting pleaſures, what wonder and amazement muſt it create in them, to ſurvey, and afterwards compare the divine glories and theſe reſemblances of them which are ſo viſible in themſelves? And this likeneſs, this reſemblance and agreement between the Almighty and themſelves cannot but prove an additional pleaſure and delight to them. How tranſported muſt a ſaint thus glorified be, when he reflects that he is now duly qualified to act in ſuch a manner as that his ſervices will be acceptable in the ſight of God; and that his body and ſoul is ſo refined and improved that God himſelf can take complacency in him? With what joy will the glorified ſaint reflect on this happy advancement of his from ſo vile, ſo wretched and deſpicable a ſtate as he was in before he had put on immortality, and was thus ſpiritualized? This will inſpire him with eternal gratitude and thankſgiving to the author of this happy improvement; happy we may well call it, for what greater happineſs can poſſibly be conceived than that of bearing a reſemblance to the moſt perfect of all Beings? Beſides, who can tell what em-

ployment

ployment God may poſſibly find for us in the next life?—We need not doubt but that he who hath promiſed to make us like himſelf, can find out ſuch occupation for us in the other world, as will be every way equal and ſuitable to that high and important ſtation, to which, not our merits but his manifold great mercies hath advanced the human nature.

When we come to heaven, we ſhall enter into the ſociety of the bleſſed angels and of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; we ſhall be freed from all thoſe little paſſions and infirmities which, whilſt here on earth, rendered even the moſt virtuous men ſometimes diſtaſteful to their companions; we ſhall then meet with all thoſe illuſtrious perſonages, thoſe heroic minds, thoſe innocent and benevolent ſouls, whom we have either ſeen and converſed with, or ever read of in hiſtory. There we ſhall meet, not only with many of our neareſt and deareſt relations, and many of our moſt intimate and affectionate friends, but in all probability with many of our enemies, to whom we ſhall then be perfectly reconciled; notwithſtanding all the warm debates and peeviſh controverſies which poſſibly we may have maintained with them in this world. For heaven is a place of perfect harmony and uninterrupted friendſhip: in that happy region no diſſentions ever can ariſe: on the contrary all the arts of ſoft perſuaſion, all the prudent methods of rendering converſation entirely agreeable to each other, will conſtantly be practiſed there: and what greater happineſs can poſſibly be conceived than that of converſing freely with ſo many illuſtrious perſonages, without the leaſt allay of folly or deceit of jealouſy or deſign upon one another? No ſpark of avarice or ambition, no degree of anger or moroſeneſs, which ſo frequently interrupt the pleaſures and repoſe of mankind, can poſſibly ſubſiſt in thoſe happy manſions. O bleſſed peaceful fellowſhip! how much might the ſtrifes, the contentions, the confuſions, and the mean ſor-

did actions of baſe men in this world juſtly make one long to die in the Lord that we may live with him in everlaſting happineſs.

And when this bleſſed Society ſhall be aſſembled together, and thus united, they ſhall join with one conſent to utter their moſt grateful thankſgivings to the Almighty for all his works of wonder: for the effects of that infinite goodneſs, that unerring wiſdom, and almighty power which are clearly ſeen in the creation of the world, and the good conduct obſerved in the preſervation of all things therein; but more particularly for his diſtinguiſhing favours conferred on mankind, not only for their bare exiſtence but for the comfort of their lives, and for all his providential diſpenſations towards them: and above all, for the redemption of their ſouls, by the death of his only and dearly beloved ſon, for the free remiſſion of all their tranſgreſſions, for the gracious aſſiſtance of his holy ſpirit, and for his condeſcending goodneſs in conducting them ſafely through all the dangers, the troubles and temptations of an enſnaring world, to the ſecure poſſeſſion of that glory and happineſs which they then ſhall be partakers of, and indiſpenſibly bound to praiſe God for all eternity. This—this ſhall be the important employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above, and theſe the principal ingredients of their happineſs. And if there were no other, as there may be ten thouſand more for any thing we can tell, yet generous and virtuous minds will eaſily underſtand how great a pleaſure muſt needs ariſe from the improvement of our knowledge, and the free exerciſe of our love, and from a grateful and perpetual acknowledgment of the greateſt benefits that finite creatures are capable of receiving.

It will, doubtleſs, be a great addition to the happineſs of heaven, that its joys ſhall never, even for one ſingle moment, be interrupted. No ſin ſhall enter there to caſt a cloud over the face of God, or hinder the communications of his love; the former ſhall perpetually ſhine and make a day without a night; the latter, like an eternal river

river of delights and pleaſures ſhall for ever flow. The ſpiritual body and immortal ſoul ſhall be able to act with unwearied vigour, and ſhall never ceaſe to feel their taſteful pleaſures. There will be no intervals wherein they ſhall be either indolent or inactive, but eternity itſelf ſhall be ſpent in the moſt agreeable employment. Oh! how deſireable muſt that ſtate be, where the partakers of it, ſhall have nothing to do but to be happy! A ſtate which is all pleaſure without the leaſt mixture of pain or diſappointment. Moreover, theſe pleaſures to enhance the value of them are not fading or tranſitory but everlaſting. The divine glory once manifeſted ſhall never fade, nor ſhall the fountain of love then fully opened, ever be exhauſted or run low. The good enjoyed there is an unchangeable, as well as an infinite good; and the happy ſaints themſelves, in the mighty improvement of their faculties, are made capable of enjoying to all eternity the moſt exalted raptures. All the capacities indeed with which mankind are endowed are ſo weak, that they cannot bear a more than common pleaſure any conſiderable time: but it is not ſo with celeſtial enjoyments, the faculties of the ſaints are ſo far improved that they there enjoy the richeſt delights without ſatiety. They are there capable of perpetual extaſies, and everlaſting tranſports. Now, upon the ſuppoſition that the joys of thoſe that die in the Lord, ſhould be no greater than thoſe we have been deſcribing, would it not be downright madneſs for us to neglect the duties of our religion, which are pleaſant in themſelves, and without which we can never attain that happineſs we have been diſcourſing of, nor avoid thoſe miſeries of a future ſtate which are dreadful beyond all imagination?

It is no inconſiderable inſtance of God's gracious intentions that he has been pleaſed to make this world irkſome and uneaſy to us, that there might be no ſufficient temptations to reaſonable and conſiderate men to take them off from the care and thought of their future happineſs; that God and heaven might have no rival here be-

low; that there might be nothing in this world that might lay any juſt claim to our affection, or court us with any advantage, in compariſon of everlaſting life and glory. If we valued heaven in any degree of proportion to what it really deſerves, we ſhould take infinitely more pains than we do to attain it.—Whenever we admit into conſideration the glories that are above, how muſt we blame our ſhameful indolence, and condemn our egregious folly, that we are leſs ſolicitous about the eternal welfare of our ſouls, than moſt men are about the health and preſervation of their bodies; that we will not labour half ſo ſtrenuouſly for an everlaſting inheritance, as men generally do for one only of a temporary duration! Let us remember that our eternal happineſs now lies at ſtake: And how ſhould it quicken our endeavours to have ſuch a reward ſet before us? Would we but often repreſent to our minds the glories of another world, how ſhould we feel our hearts glow within us? We ſhould be all life and ſpirit, and ſhould execute God's will with almoſt the ſame readineſs and alacrity as the angels themſelves. The conſideration of heaven, and the firm perſuaſion of our future happineſs would actuate all the powers of our ſouls, and be continually inſpiring us with freſh vigour in the ways of virtue and religion. How ſhould ſuch thoughts as theſe ſwell our reſolutions, and confirm our purpoſes of obedience; ſince, if we have our fruit unto holineſs, our end will be everlaſting life!

The incomparably greater good of the life to come, will,—with a wiſe and conſiderate man,—weigh down all the evils of this:—for the evils of this life afflict us more or leſs, according as our ſouls are fortified with conſiderations proper to ſupport us under them. When we reflect that we have but a little while to be ſojourners here, that we are upon our journey, travelling towards our heavenly country, where we ſhall meet with all the delights we can poſſibly deſire, ſurely it ought to give us but very little, if any concern, ſhould we meet with ſome hardſhips in our paſſage, and

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want ſome of thoſe accommodations we might expect at home. This is but the common fate of travellers, and we muſt bear things patiently though we find they incommode us. Theſe difficulties and inconveniences will in a ſhort time be over, and after a few days quite forgotten, and be to us as if they never had been. And when we are ſafely landed in our own country, with what pleaſure ſhall we look back upon thoſe difficulties which we have ſo happily ſurmounted? The more troubles we have paſſed through, the kinder will the treatment ſeem which we ſhall find at our father's houſe. When we come to heaven our happineſs ſhall then be as real as our miſeries were here upon earth, and far greater and more laſting. And what great matter is it, though we ſuffer for a while in this world, provided we eſcape the endleſs and inſupportable torments of the next; though we have not our good things in this life, if infinitely greater be reſerved for us, and we ſhall receive them with intereſt in the other? Several of the evils and calamities of this life would be inſufferable indeed, were there nothing better to be hoped for hereafter. If this were true, men would be of all creatures the moſt miſerable. Religion, however, hath abundantly convinced us of the contrary, and the aſſurance of this enabled the primitive chriſtians with undaunted reſolution to bear up under the ſevereſt afflictions; nay to glory in their tribulation, and to take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven, they had a better and more enduring ſubſtance.

Did men but firmly believe the rewards of another world, their religion would not be a ſcene only of outward parade, but their devotion would be ſolemn and ſerious, for no man would put on a form of godlineſs, who was deſtitute of the power of it. We ſhould do nothing merely to procure the good opinion of others, but all with reſpect to God and our own conſciences, and be as cautious and wary of our inward thoughts and moſt retired actions, as if we were in the preſence of the moſt auguſt aſſembly,

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as well knowing that in the next life, men ſhall not be rewarded for what they ſeemed to be, but for what they really were, in this world.—Therefore whatever we think, or ſpeak, or do, we ſhould always remember, that the day of revelation is coming, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed, when all diſguiſes ſhall be laid aſide, and every one's maſk ſhall be taken off, and all our actions and deſigns expoſed to the view of men and angels. —That we muſt all die—is as certain as if an expreſs meſſenger ſhould come to every one of us from the other world and tell us ſo. Nothing then can ſo effectually free us from the fears of death, as to have our imaginations filled with the joys of thoſe bleſſed ſaints who died in the Lord. Death is doubtleſs terrible to nature, but the comfortable hopes of a bleſſed immortality are able to reconcile us to death, and in a great meaſure to take away the terror of it.—We can eaſily conceive that the thoughts of death may be gloomy and alarming even to good men, and that we have never more need of aſſiſtance and conſolation, than when we are under conflicts with this laſt enemy, but then the hopes of an happy eternity will wonderfully ſupport a dying man in that hour of trial. He that looks upon death only as a paſſage to glory, may welcome the meſſenger of it, as bringing him the beſt and moſt joyful news, that ever came to him in his whole life; and no one can ſtay behind in this world with half the comfort that this man leaves it. It will not be needful for us to ſay much in applying this diſcourſe, almoſt every ſermon we hear is but a repetition of this argument. From theſe delightful proſpects ariſe the great enforcements of our duty. We preſume there are few or none of our auditors but will moſt readily profeſs their belief of the happineſs of heaven.—Now if we believe this great truth in very earneſt, let us alſo do it to ſolid purpoſe, and not content ourſelves with a cold and cuſtomary aſſent, but endeavour to raiſe our faith to ſuch an height, that it may have an

effectual

effectual influence upon our lives. The general belief that education hath infuſed, is but a dead image in the ſoul that produceth nothing. Let us then endeavour by fervent prayer and frequent meditation to invigorate and excite ours to that degree, that it may be a living repreſentation of eternal things;—that our faith may be the certainty and preſence of the inviſible world.—The ſubſtance of things hoped for,—the evidence of things not ſeen. That we may have ſuch an apprehenſion of it, as if the proſpect were open, and our eyes beheld it; that we may fix our thoughts there, and fill up our ſouls with the conſideration of that world. Such a faith as this ought to be our aim; and if we did ſo believe the other world, what excellent, what happy perſons ſhould we be in this?—Such a faith as we have been deſcribing would ſecure us from the flatteries and temptations of this ſordid life; and excite us to more earneſt longings and more vigorous endeavours after the happineſs of a better.—The compariſon would enable us to deſpiſe this vain world, and to bear all the croſſes of it, with magnanimity and ſteadineſs of mind. It would quiet our ſolicitudes, and anſwer the objections that ſometimes diſturb the minds of good men on account of the preſent unequal diſtribution of the comforts of this life. It would make the moſt difficult and unpalateable ſervices of religion eaſy and pleaſant to us; and fill our lives with ſweet hopes and ſolid delights—ſuch as are infinitely more agreeable than the moſt exquiſite ſenſual joys. It would afford us ſatisfaction, under diſappointments; and mingle ſweet calmneſs with our anxieties and cares: it would raiſe our deſigns and thoughts to things generous and noble, and make us live like the inhabitants of an heavenly country. Such bleſſed effects as theſe follow this faith here, and unmeaſureably,—unſpeakably greater in the other world. The viſion of God,—The full enjoyment of his love,—The perfection of our natures

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and the completion of our happineſs, amidſt the triumphant ſongs of ſaints and angels, in the exerciſe of holy love, admiration and praiſe.

To ſum up the matter,—we have told you, that the happineſs of thoſe who die in the Lord is infinitely beyond any thing this world can afford; that it is great in itſelf, and eternal in its duration, and far above any thing that we can now form the leaſt idea of.—All that now remains is to perſuade you and myſelf to take this important point into our moſt ſerious conſideration, and to this end, we ſhall apply our diſcourſe to thoſe who are careleſs and remiſs in a matter of ſuch vaſt concernment.—Here we conceive the the very beſt of us will be found greatly defective, and ſo much the more to be blamed, by how much we are more convinced than others of the expediency of a religious life, and that without this, no man ſhall ever be admitted into the manſions of the bleſſed. But how little do men live under the power of theſe convictions! — Notwithſtanding we are allured by the moſt glorious promiſes, awed by the greateſt fears and urged by the moſt forcible arguments in the world, yet how faintly do we run the race that is ſet before us? How frequently and how eaſily are we diverted from our chriſtian courſe by every little temptation? How cold —how careleſs, and how inconſtant are we in the exerciſes of piety, and how defective in every part of our duty? Strange ſtupidity! that a change ſo near—ſo great—ſo certain—ſhould ſo little affect us.—That the things of time ſhould move mercenary men ſo much, and the things of eternity have no manner of influence over them.

If we be chriſtians, if we verily believe the things of which we have been diſcourſing, and that after a few days more ſhall be elapſed death will come and draw aſide that thick veil which now conceals theſe momentous matters from our eyes: if we hope for the joys of heaven, or dread the ſorrows of hell,—it is time for us to be wiſe and ſerious.—Thrice happy is that man who in the days

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of his health, hath retired himſelf from the noiſe and tumult of this world and made that careful preparation for a better life, as may give him that conſtancy and firmneſs of ſpirit as to be able to bear the thoughts and approaches of his great change without amazement, and to have a mind almoſt equally poiſed between that ſtrong inclination of nature, which makes us deſirous to live, and that wiſer dictate of reaſon and religion which ſhould make us willing and contented to die, whenever God thinks fit to call us to be partakers of his glory.

Friends and fellow chriſtians, let us not go home without profiting by the gracious and explicit declaration of the bleſſedneſs of departed ſaints tranſmitted to us by the beloved diſciple of our revered Lord. The only effectual way to extract virtue from the holy writings is to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt them, with a mind ſincerely diſpoſed to know and act what is agreeable to righteouſneſs and truth. A man thus qualified will have an ear open to what the preacher uttereth; will give the arguments for religion their full ſcope and force; and whatever ſhall be delivered out of the ſacred ſcriptures, or agreeable thereto he will receive cordially, retain faithfully, and produce into action according to his ability of doing good.

The moſt excellent and noble endowments may unfortunately prove inſufficient in ſearching the words of eternal life; for without a principle of ſincerity and upright intention which is the firſt and moſt neceſſary qualification for the happineſs of heaven; the beſt and ſtrongeſt preſervative againſt all thoſe extravagant and prophane opinions which have lately had ſuch a peſtilential influence upon the world, that bad men affect neither to feel diſgrace here, or fear puniſhment hereafter. Brethren, ſet aſide ſuch a governing principle, and all is mad riot—anarchy—and confuſion.—For—without the love of God,—without a heart warmed by true benevolence,—learning,—genius,—lively imagination,—and every ſpecies of mor-

tal acquirement, will vaniſh as the baſeleſs fabrick of a dream, nor leave a trace behind.

In one concluding word, if we be wiſe, if we conſult our trueſt intereſt we ſhall,—while the lamp of life is ſtill burning within us, —imprint upon the tablet of our heart,—that, bleſſed are thoſe and thoſe only which die in the Lord.

SUNDAY

SUNDAY LII.

The Honeſt Man.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 8.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT; IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON THESE THINGS.

HERE are many particulars recommended by the Apoſtle to our thoughts and practice, ſo many, that I preſume it will not be expected we ſhould diſtinctly treat of every article, for that were a taſk of too nice a nature, and too large a compaſs to be finiſhed within any reaſonable time. Beſides, in this enumeration there are ſeveral words of the ſame import, which may therefore be reduced to the following inſtances of a chriſtian's duty: namely, A conſtant adherence to genuine religion. Juſtice in our dealings. A life of purity, and the conſtant practice of every thing virtuous and commendable. And whoſoever he be that attends

ſteadily to theſe particulars, may unqueſtionably conclude of himſelf, that he is an HONEST MAN—which certain of our Ethic Poets has very happily denominated

THE NOBLEST WORK OF GOD.

I ſhall take occaſion, from this ſtricture on the words of our text, to give you a portraiture of an honeſt man. That is, one whoſe rule of life induces him to practiſe whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; and to ſhew you the wiſdom and excellency of ſuch behaviour; that it not only contributes to our preſent advantage, but will bring a man peace at the laſt.—That is, when this frail tenement of clay ſhall be evidently approaching the gates of death, and what muſt be infinitely more alarming,—the bar of judgment.

VIEW THEN THE HONEST MAN!

We ſhall ſet before you this character in the plaineſt dreſs imaginable, for it would render our deſcription cold, ſpiritleſs and unnatural were we to affect a pomp of language or a diſplay of learning.

THE HONEST MAN in all things follows the dictates of his conſcience. He makes his duty the rule of his actions. He always propoſeth to himſelf righteous ends, and purſues thoſe ends by righteous ways only. This may be called the general out-line of his character; but for the more lively denotement of him, it will be fit that we repreſent him under thoſe ſeveral capacities in which his honeſty is ſeen and expreſſed: and here we muſt mark him with reſpect to God, and with reſpect to man. Under the former conſideration we are to view his RELIGION. Under the latter, his CONVERSATION.

To enter with propriety into the character of an Honeſt Man, we muſt firſt take notice of his religious deportment, for in truth that is a point eſſentially neceſſary to honeſty. Indeed, take away religion

and

and the foundation of honeſty will be deſtroyed, becauſe all the dictates of conſcience, and all the obligation to live up to thoſe dictates will be obliterated. He then that deſerves the name of an honeſt man reſpecting the Deity, will not ſelect out of God's commandments which to obſerve, to the neglect of the reſt; but endeavour ſincerely to obſerve them all. He calls no ſin a little one, becauſe his temper happens to biaſs him towards it; or the courſe of his life leads him more frequently into the temptation of indulging therein, but he hath an hearty uniform averſion to every thing that is evil. He is moreover an utter enemy to all perplexing principles, and never ſhews the leaſt diſregard to any man on account of modes of worſhip, for as much as he loves truth, he is not leſs concerned for the peace of ſociety.

To advance one ſtep further, the Honeſt Man will not be content with any determined proportion of goodneſs, nor will he ſit down at ſuch a point of virtue as he hath already attained, without aiming at a further degree of increaſe and proficiency. For the path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, ſays the wiſe man, ſhining more and more unto a perfect day. A ſoul truly touched with a grateful ſenſe of the infinite mercies of God towards us, will never bound itſelf in its returns, but will endeavour to love as much and to obey as far as poſſible, well knowing that let its attainments be what they will, they cannot but fall ſhort of its obligations; therefore if any one finds himſelf inclined to circumſcribe his practice within ſuch or ſuch limits of duty, beyond which he never intends or expects to go, to hold faſt the diſſipations of life, and to enjoy as much of them as ever he can, arguing always for the utmoſt extent of his chriſtian liberty, and deſiring to make his obligations as narrow as may be—let ſuch a one know aſſuredly that he is not honeſt towards God, nor will he be accepted by the judge of all hearts, and the diſcerner of all ſpirits.

Is any man doubtful of his ſituation or condition in reſpect to God? let him examine himſelf whether he be as inclinable to exerciſe the graces and virtues of the chriſtian life in private as in public, without doing any thing merely for the applauſe or fear of men; but under a conſcientious regard to him that ſeeth in ſecret, and under an expectation that he who ſeeth in ſecret, will at the great day of account, reward him openly. For example, let a man conſider whether he be as regular in performing his cloſet devotions, as in repairing to the public offices of the Church, and as uneaſy under the omiſſion of the one as the other; and when he prays in private, whether he be as compoſed, as reverent, and ſolemn in his behaviour, as he is when the eyes of a great aſſembly are upon him. For he only is truly devout who is ſo in his family and in his cloſet, where he hath no witneſs but God and his own ſoul. Let the Honeſt Man examine himſelf by one teſt more. Does he delight to read the holy ſcriptures?—Can he find ſomewhat more in them than in mere human writings, and is he apt to ſettle into a pious compoſure of mind while he his peruſing them? When he comes to them is it with eagerneſs and pleaſure? Is he uneaſy under any long diſcontinuance of his converſation with them?—If he can anſwer theſe queſtions to his own ſatisfaction—all is well, for this is the token and character by which the experienced Pſalmiſt teaches us to know an Honeſt Man. "His delight, ſaith he, is in "the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate day and "night. And again,—he rejoiceth in God's word, as one that "findeth great ſpoils. Did not our heart burn within us, ſaid "the good diſciple, while he talked with us by the way, and "while he opened to us the ſcriptures?"

In a word, the Honeſt Man, in reſpect to God, endeavours to pay that reaſonable ſervice and worſhip, which is due from a rational creature to his creator. He looks upon himſelf as continually under the view of an omniſcient Being whoſe eyes are in every

place

place beholding the evil and the good. He treats every thing relating to the Deity with due reſpect and reverence, and at all times walks humbly with his God.

Let us proceed now to an eſtimate of the Honeſt Man in his converſation: and give ſome account of him with reference to his carriage and demeanour among men.

The Honeſt Man is uniformly fair and candid, righteous and equitable. He knows not how to diſſemble or equivocate, he acts openly as in the view of all the world, and never does that to others, he would not moſt willingly ſubmit to himſelf. He is true to his engagements, keeps his word and promiſe, though to his own diſadvantage; he hurts none by word or deed, but does all the good that is in his power. He is conſiderate.—He is benevolent.—He employeth every talent to the honour of God, and the benefit of mankind, and though he be always zealouſly affected in a good matter, he endeavours, in the midſt of his zeal, to keep a conſcience void of offence.

The Honeſt Man is moreover truly charitable. He would not only as ſoon, but rather ſooner give his alms in ſecret, than in the ſight of men.—He is moreover truly grateful. For when there is occaſion and opportunity, he will acknowledge a kindneſs and requite a benefit to the relations of his deceaſed friend, though he be ſure that all memory of the obligation died with him, and that none are conſcious of it but God and his own conſcience. He keeps his reaſon in the throne where it ought to be, and makes every appetite and paſſion obedient to its direction. And when reaſon has its due command, and is ſupported by the aſſiſtance of God's holy ſpirit, then the Honeſt Man ordereth his converſation aright and ſhines as a light in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation.

" Is the Honeſt Man a SERVANT. He will deem his maſter wor-
" thy of all honour. He will obey him in all things lawful. He
" will not anſwer again. He will be faithful not only to the good

" and

" and gentle, but alſo to the froward.—Is the Honeſt Man a " MASTER. He will not only pay his labourer with the utmoſt " punctuality, but will ſoften as much as may be the rigour of his " condition by well timed indulgences. If his ſervant offends from " ignorance, he will pardon him, if from ill adviſers or bad tem- " per, he will on promiſe or proſpect of amendment forgive him. " He gently leads him to the paths of virtue by his precepts and " example, and excites his ambition by frequent proofs that he " regards a faithful ſervant as a valuable member of his family. " View this upright man in the character of a FRIEND and he " cannot fail of the higheſt commendation, for he loves his neigh- " bour as himſelf, and every action of his life demonſtrates this " to be his ruling principle. As a HUSBAND this truly worthy " perſonage will love his wife with affection and delicacy. He " will be her guide, her companion and her friend. He will la- " bour inceſſantly to convince her that their happy union here, " will be finally completed in the realms of happineſs hereafter. " Is the Honeſt Man a SON.—He will honour his parents.—He " will obey their commands.—He will comfort their age by his " reſpectful deportment. Should they need his aid he will " exert his utmoſt induſtry that they may want no manner of " thing that is good, or that can prolong or render their lives " deſirable or pleaſant. Is the Honeſt Man a FATHER. He will " be tender and affectionate to his children.—He will correct them " with temper.—He will reward them without partiality.—He " will be prudent that they may be happy.—He will be induſtri- " ous that they may be rich.—He will be good and virtuous that " they may be reſpected here, and happy hereafter."

It muſt be confeſſed that ſuch a ſincerely pious and good man, is not a ſight to be ſeen in every place, or at all times. The known ſtory of Diogenes, who appeared at noon day amidſt a vaſt concourſe of people with a lighted candle and lanthorn, declaring

that

that he was ſeeking for an Honeſt Man, will too forcibly evince, that former ages in this article were not greatly ſuperior to our own. Similar to this, but of much higher authority,—is our Bleſſed Saviour's exclamation on ſeeing Nathanael coming to him, BEHOLD AN ISRAELITE INDEED IN-WHOM IS NO GUILE.

Thus you have in brief the character of a man who laudably follows, the apoſtolical precept—with reſpect to whatſoever things are true—honeſt—juſt—pure—lovely—and of good report. And if there be any praiſe it belongs to this truly amiable perſonage THE HONEST MAN.

Though this we confeſs has been but a very imperfect portrait, yet we truſt it will be ſufficient to diſcover in ſome degree the excellency and wiſdom of ſuch behaviour. For what can be more lovely, than to ſee a man obſerve juſtice, equity, and uprightneſs in all his dealings? How agreeable are theſe things to the dictates of ſound reaſon! Virtue is no leſs delightful to the mind than light to the eye, or harmony to the ear. It exalts and refines the human nature, brings it as near as poſſible to its original innocence. It reconciles and unites us to God, and makes us reſemble our father who is in heaven. It gives preſent peace and comfort in this life, and the moſt infallible ſecurity we can have of eternal peace and happineſs hereafter. This we are ſure will recommend us to the divine favour; whereas without this nothing elſe can. No other virtues, no other performances whatever will avail us without honeſty.

Conſidering the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of our lives it is not worth while to tread the paths of treachery and deceit. To what purpoſe ſhould we covet worldly advantages, when, peradventure, this very night our ſoul may be required of us? Why ſhould any man by warping his judgment, or acting contrary to it, incur at once the diſpleaſure of God, and the diſcontent of his own mind?—The contrary to this is the trueſt policy, for the Honeſt

Man enjoys as much pleaſure and delight as this world can afford, and that without the danger of ſuffering ſhame and remorſe.

But above all, an Honeſt Man finds honour, reputation and a a good name,—the tendereſt concern of a generous ſoul.—Is there any man generally in better eſteem and credit, than the man who has given the world proof, that he ſcorns to do an unworthy or baſe action? Does any thing caſt a greater luſtre, than virtue, and that even in the eyes of thoſe that have none themſelves? Is not this confeſſed even by hypocriſy itſelf? Which is an extorted acknowledgment, a forced tribute which vice pays to virtue. He that ſincerely intends the benefit of mankind, he that is ready to ſacrifice his deareſt intereſts for the ſervice of the public, is the man that deſerves true honour. This cannot fail of recommending him to the favour of the great, to the friendſhip of the good, and to the eſteem of all mankind. This muſt raiſe him up a name, and force his very enemies to praiſe him in the gates.

Here then we behold the wiſdom of honeſty from the preſent advantages that attend it.—But this is not all, mark the perfect and behold the upright, and you will find the end of that man is peace. His life is not only happy, but his death comfortable,—there is peace in his end, and his hope full of immortality. And when the moſt magnificent works and deſigns of the ungodly ſhall be buried in diſgrace and oblivion, the righteous ſhall be had in everlaſting remembrance.

It cannot be denied, however, but that the Honeſt Man muſt wait till hereafter for his full recompence of reward. Whatever ſatisfaction or applauſe he may enjoy here, is properly the natural conſequence of virtue—the glorious reward of which is only to be obtained in another world, in a future ſtate, wherein God the righteous judge ſhall render to every man according to his works. In the mean time this world is a ſtate of trial, wherein the faithful Servants of God muſt work out their ſalvation till the day is

ſpent

ſpent, and the time of retribution approaches. Then we know aſſuredly that it ſhall be well with them that fear the Lord, however it has fared with them here. Then ſhall oppreſſed virtue hold up her head, truth ſhall then prevail, and the Honeſt Man ſtand up in great boldneſs, and when the falſe, the treacherous part of mankind ſhall be doomed to eternal confuſion, theſe ſhall enter into glory, attended with the applauſes and acclamations of ſaints and angels.

Holy David, the man after God's own heart, has, in a moſt elegant manner illuſtrated this character in a ſhort Pſalm, which I would recommend to parents and maſters of families to impreſs betimes on the minds of ſuch youth as are intruſted to their care; —it may have a happy influence on their conduct through life.

PSALM XV.

" Lord who ſhall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who ſhall reſt upon " thy holy hill? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth " the thing which is right, and ſpeaketh the truth from his " heart. He that hath uſed no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil " to his neighbour; and hath not ſlandered his neighbour. He that " ſetteth not by himſelf, but is lowly in his own eyes and maketh " much of them that fear the Lord. He that ſweareth unto " his neighbour, and diſappointeth him not, though it were " to his own hindrance. He that hath not given his money upon " uſury, nor taken reward againſt the innocent.

" WHOSO DOETH THESE THINGS SHALL NEVER FALL."

To this we may ſubjoin that moſt admirable and comprehenſive exhortation of the Apoſtle in our text.—" Finally, brethren, what- " ſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever " things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are " lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any vir- " tue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things."—That is, —whatever be the changes and chances of this mortal life.—Hold faſt your integrity—and reſolve to live and die—THE HONEST MAN.

THE

SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

FAMILY-PREACHER:

CONSISTING OF

OCCASIONAL SERMONS,

The greater Part Originals, never before printed.

IF WE SURVEY THE HOMILIES OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH, WE SHALL DISCERN THAT UPON FESTIVAL DAYS, THE SUBJECT OF THE HOMILY WAS CONSTANTLY THE BUSINESS OF THE DAY.

HAMMOND.

SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

FAMILY-PREACHER:

CONSISTING OF

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SERMON I.

For ASH-WEDNESDAY.

Strictures concerning the Torments of Hell.

HEBREWS X. 31

IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD.

SINCE a very tremendous end will doubtleſs be the lot of all ſuch as depart this life without making their peace with God, the diſcipline of our Church evidently points out to us, —particularly at the beginning of Lent,—ſerious inveſtigations concerning the reality and duration of the puniſhments of hell; "to the intent that being admoniſhed of the great indignation "of God againſt ſinners, ye may the rather be moved to earneſt "and true repentance, and may walk more warily in theſe dan-"gerous days." Good men will receive unſpeakable comfort from well grounded aſſurances that they are in no danger of falling into ſo dreadful a condemnation, but on the contrary, that they ſhall

ſhall receive joy and comfort in a future ſtate. Bad men, from ſuch contemplations, may happily be induced to reflect in time on the terrors of the Lord;—may ſeek for inſtruction, and, being aſſured of their danger, may be taught to know and feel that it is a fearful thing indeed to fall into the hands of the living God.

From theſe words we ſhall take occaſion to ſet before you in the ſtrongeſt light we are able, the amazing torments which thoſe poor wretches muſt undergo, who whilſt living ſinned without remorſe, and died without repentance. To do juſtice to our argument we ſhall lay aſide uncertain conjectures, and have recourſe only to the ſpirit of thoſe declarations which are to be found interſperſed throughout the ſacred ſcriptures concerning thoſe endleſs torments; and truly it behoves us to be very ſerious and attentive to an enquiry of ſo important a nature. We are now about to ſee what will be the end, what the fatal conſequence of a wicked courſe of life; and in order to form an adequate idea of it, we muſt look, by faith, into the eternal priſons of the damned; that we may, by ſuch a view, be deterred from the committing of thoſe enormities which lead to ſo fearful a deſtruction; that by reflecting on the deploreable effects of other men's folly, we may learn wiſdom, and that their puniſhment may be the ground-work of our future felicity.

Now hell,—that is to ſay,—the manſions of the damned, being a place wherein divine juſtice executes his hotteſt vengeance on all impenitent ſinners, we may eaſily conceive it to be a very diſmal ſituation. It was firſt prepared for ſatan and his angels, when they rebelled againſt their Maker, and thereby became unworthy to partake any longer of the honour and happineſs of his preſence and glory in heaven; then was this place formed for their reception, where they are to be puniſhed for ever, according to their demerits; and the nature and ſtate of the place muſt, doubtleſs, be ſuch, as is very ſuitable to ſo tremendous a deſign. The holy ſcriptures expreſly tell us, in many places, which cannot but occur to your remembrance,

membrance, that hell is a place of impenetrable darkneſs, and if we were to underſtand this literally, it is but reaſonable; ſince it is a place ſet apart for puniſhment and miſery, and darkneſs is beſt adapted to ſuch a plan. Light is cheerful and pleaſant, but darkneſs melancholy and ſad. As it is no ways to be queſtioned, but that a very bright light or glory will embelliſh the celeſtial manſions, and make them infinitely more engaging on that account; ſo likewiſe ſuch a darkneſs may be ſuppoſed to hover over the deep abyſs of hell, as muſt augment its terrors. Figure to yourſelves then a place, wherein no chearful ray of either ſun or moon had ever entered, a dungeon into which no other gleam of light had ever pierced than what ariſes from ſulphureous flames. A gloomy, duſky light we may ſuppoſe indeed it may enjoy if that can properly be termed enjoyment, ſince ſuch a gloom ſeems to contribute more towards the horror of it, than an abſolute privation of all light would do; beſides, ſuch a gloom is more agreeable to another property, which the holy ſcriptures attribute to this woeful place, namely, that it is ſaid to be filled with fire.

Our bleſſed Lord himſelf declares, that when he ſhall come at the laſt day to judge both the quick and the dead, he will pronounce this irreverſible ſentence upon wicked men, "Depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting fire." There are ſome difficulties, it is true, in underſtanding this fire literally; but yet we may do it, without any treſpaſs upon our reaſon. What a ſort of fire indeed it is, we muſt not pretend to determine; but that it is of a very different nature from that which we are here acquainted with, muſt be allowed from what is ſaid of it in ſcripture.

It is a fire prepared for the devil and his angels; who as we ſuppoſe are meer ſpirits, and it is ſuch therefore as is able to afflict a ſpirit with a ſenſe of pain and torment. And ſuch too it muſt be, that it may affect and puniſh the ſeparate ſouls of men, while their bodies yet remain mouldering in the grave. It is alſo a fire which in its

nature is everlaſting, and muſt be therefore of a different kind from ours. The latter is a tranſient, periſhing flame, which conſumes its own fuel, and then expires; but the former will not only exceedingly torment, but will never waſte the fuel on which it feeds; will never conſume thoſe wicked men, who ſhall be thrown headlong into it; nor will it ever languiſh, or go out. It is a peculiar fire, calculated for a peculiar purpoſe; it is ſomething which the divine wrath has ordained to be his inſtrument to puniſh and torment his rebellious ſubjects; to afflict the ſouls as well as the bodies of wicked men, and even ſuch intellectual Beings as have no bodies. We muſt ſuppoſe then, the wretched creatures who are thus thrown into this abyſs of endleſs miſery, to be plunged into a lake of fire, a mighty ſea of ever-burning ſulphur. We may ſuppoſe, that theſe damned wretches are not only ſcorched, not only ſinged externally, but are glowing all within, like metals in a fiery furnace. Oh, how terrible a place and puniſhment is prepared for impenitent ſinners! How fearful a thing is it, to fall into the hands of the living God! Who of us can dwell with devouring fire? Who can endure everlaſting burnings? Since then the conditions of this place are adapted only to the deſign of it, it will be the intereſt of the ſinner to underſtand them literally. But though there may be ſome who will obſtinately refuſe to do ſo, yet they muſt grant thus much: that as the inſpired penmen of the ſacred ſcriptures deſcribe to us the joys and felicities of heaven, by things that are the moſt pleaſant and moſt endearing in this world, and after all, we are taught that thoſe joys do infinitely excel thoſe things, ſo, if they make uſe of things which are the moſt deplorable and grievous in this world, whereby to repreſent the future torments of the wicked, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe thoſe torments will be infinitely more grievous, than the ſymbols made uſe of to repreſent them are. From the darkneſs and fires therefore which are ſaid to be in hell, we may conclude, that no joy, no comfort can poſſibly enter there;

that

that it is a dark, diſmal place, ſet apart for horrid purpoſes; and that the unhappy wretches, who are doomed to thoſe gloomy regions, dwell in never-ceaſing, and moſt exquiſite tortures. No part of the body ſhall be free from agonizing pains, and the whole ſoul ſhall be filled with miſery. This will be the ſad cataſtrophe of guilty mirth and ſenſual pleaſure. This will be the final reward of that which is at preſent proſperous, and much envied wickedneſs.

But what will be an inexpreſſible addition to the torments of hell will be the wretched company, the abandoned ſociety that will be found there. The holy ſcriptures expreſly tell us, that wicked men ſhall be condemned, and thrown into a place of puniſhment prepared for the devil and his angels.—A rueful company this, from whom no comfort, no pleaſure can poſſibly be derived!—They muſt of neceſſity therefore augment each others woes; for all who are conſigned to thoſe diſmal manſions are exceſſively wicked and malicious; all are implacable enemies to each other; all is diſcord there, perpetual faction, and eternal war; peace is baniſhed from thoſe gloomy regions, and in her ſtead, fell hatred, furious contention, and uncontrouled malice ſet up their thrones. The exquiſite tortures which they all endure alike render them the unhappy objects of each others rage and reſentment. May we not reaſonably imagine on the one hand, that the apoſtate angels, inſult over damned ſouls; tell them what hopes of bliſs they are fallen from; what offers of favour and mercy they have rejected; how they have fooled away a precious ſpace of life on earth, in which they might have gained an eternity of happineſs in heaven. And may we not ſuppoſe the latter, on the other hand, revenging themſelves on thoſe devils and apoſtate ſpirits; reminding them of the glory and bliſs which they have for ever loſt through their pride and ambition; the wrath and vengeance which they have pulled down upon their own devoted heads; and loading them with curſes for their falſe ſuggeſtions, and for contributing, as far as in them

lay, towards the ruin and damnation of mankind. And we may well believe likewiſe, that wicked men will be but very vexatious and uneaſy company to one another in thoſe gloomy manſions: even thoſe companions in wickedneſs, who were the moſt pleaſing to each other in this world, will be ſome of the moſt odious and ungrateful in the next. Thoſe who tempted and encouraged one another to do wickedly, who hardened each other into a contempt and defiance of all good inſtruction and wholeſome reproof, will there treat each other with the moſt opprobrious language. In hell there is no ſuch thing as pity and compaſſion; no touches of ſorrow for the ſufferings of each other. Each individual feels ſo much miſery, that no one is diſpoſed to any expreſſions of benevolence or concern. Thoſe who made themſelves uneaſy to one another here, by their mutual hatred and frequent provocations, will be more implacable enemies than ever, and will exerciſe their utmoſt malice againſt one another on their arrival there. Theſe things are the natural products and effects of extream wickedneſs, which is always malicious and prone to miſchief; and from hence we may juſtly conclude, that the members of that infernal ſociety muſt of neceſſity be each others tormentors. How aggravating a circumſtance may we eaſily imagine it muſt be, for the moſt implacable enemies to be confined together, and ſhut up in one and the ſame dungeon. The ſtraitneſs of their priſon perhaps will not admit, that any one of them may retire from the reſt, to lament his own miſeries alone, and to be free from the vexations of his invidious companions. This ſociety will likewiſe be very uneaſy to each other upon this further account, namely, that they are all perfectly miſerable objects. Every one there dwells amongſt a company of wretches who are ever complaining. Every one is ſurrounded with ſuch, and ſuch only: which way ſoever they turn themſelves, they can behold no other than ſpectacles of horror. It cannot be difficult to apprehend, that it muſt be

be a moſt dreadful mortification to dwell with thoſe who are in continual torment. We are commonly affected, as it were, with the ſorrows of thoſe whom we converſe with, and it makes us dull and melancholy to ſit with them. Certainly then, it will be a very diſmal thing to be confined in this dark and dreary houſe of mourning; amidſt eternal howlings, and rueful complaints of deſpairing creatures. What a harſh and diſcordant ſound will the mixture of their ſhrieks, their groans, and their ravings make! What a ghaſtly ſpectacle will it be to ſee one another ſurrounded with flames, and pierced through with fires; to ſee the diſtorted countenances by which each one is forced to betray the torments that he feels! Thus the damned creatures burn all the more, and all are the more miſerable for their being confined together.

The unruly luſts and paſſions which the obdurate and impenitent ſinner went out of the world poſſeſt of and governed by, will exceedingly add to his miſery and puniſhment; for he muſt remain ſubject and enſlaved to them for ever; they are the diſorders, the diſtempers of the ſoul; they diſcompoſe its harmony, and diſturb its peace; they deform, and fill it with diſcord and confuſion. In hell, thoſe violent deſires will remain; but then there will be no poſſibility of ever gratifying them. And from fruſtrated, vain and violent deſire, the ſinner muſt needs conceive an unſpeakable torment; and this, like a too cumbrous load, will gaul and oppreſs him. His ſorrows are pure and unmixed, ſuch as have not the leaſt allay of comfort or of hope. He lives in doleful anguiſh of mind; he can perceive, he can think of nothing, but what gives him grief and pain. He mourns, when he reflects on what he has been, and what he is; what he might have attained and enjoyed, and what he muſt now endure for ever and ever.

It is highly probable likewiſe, that the inhabitants of hell are tranſported with an empty, impotent rage againſt the almighty; for we may obſerve what rage, what defiance of heaven will ſometimes

times poſſeſs the hardened ſinner here, when he meets with any conſiderable affliction, or but a contradiction to his wayward humour. And if he be poſſeſſed with the like inordinate, reſtleſs, and unruly paſſions there, they will torment him to the laſt degree; becauſe he will be ſenſible, that all the utmoſt efforts of his malice will be vain, and ſting no one but himſelf. The ſinner, when once chained down in his infernal dungeon, cannot humbly ſubmit to his griefs, nor bear his afflictions with any degree of patience, and by that means make them the more eaſy and tolerable to himſelf: he never was accuſtomed to an acquieſcence and ſubmiſſion to the divine will whilſt here on earth, and therefore cannot bear the thoughts of the leaſt condeſcenſion in his gloomy cavern. He will therefore be always engaging in a vain and fruitleſs conteſt with one that is too mighty for him; always ſtruggling with adamantine chains which will hold him faſt, notwithſtanding all his endeavours to get looſe.

He is tormented with envy likewiſe, we may well imagine, againſt the happy inhabitants of heaven. With envy and diſdain he ſees ſome honoured whom he deſpiſed, ſome juſtified whom he condemned, ſome applauded whom he ſlandered and reproached, and ſome bleſſed and happy whom he perſecuted; yea bleſſed for thoſe perſecutions, which they ſuffered from him, whilſt he is condemned, and doomed to eternal torments for inflicting them. Thus a paſſionate and vicious mind may be a ſevere torment to itſelf; and the ſinner in hell will be an everlaſting ſelf-tormentor. For he will continually be aiming at the gratification of his paſſions, which he can never acccompliſh, and will be inceſſantly endeavouring to break thoſe fetters with which he will be faſt bound for ever and ever.

Bitter deſpair will be another exquiſite torment which the ſinner muſt endure. He lies continually reflecting on the eternity of his torments. Whatever harraſſes and perplexes him, carries this additional

ditional ſting with it from his own conſciouſneſs, that the vexation will never ceaſe. Are all his darling pleaſures and enjoyments vaniſhed?—His own conſcience aſſures him that they are.—Does he find himſelf condemned to a diſmal place where no joy has the leaſt admiſſion? Does he perceive himſelf confined to a moſt inſufferable ſet of companions? Does he feel himſelf univerſally afflicted with inexpreſſible torments? All this his diſtracted thoughts convince him he muſt endure for ever. As his condition is truly deſperate, ſo he knows it to be ſo; and deſpair accordingly has got the full poſſeſſion of his ſoul, and afflicts him with all its bitterneſs. He is not able to flatter himſelf there, even with the fainteſt glimpſe of hope; nay, he cannot there procure ſo much eaſe as even a falſe hope would afford: No, whatever he may believe now concerning the duration of thoſe torments, he will then be aſſured, that they ſhall laſt for ever. He will have the terrible ſentence of the judge, which has doomed him to everlaſting fire, always ſounding in his ears; and by his thus continually reflecting on the eternity of his torments, he afflicts himſelf with what is to come, as well as with what he actually endures; and collects as it were, into every moment of his duration, the terror of an eternal torment. As hope can alleviate the heavieſt ſorrows, and give ſome eaſe under the moſt agonizing pains, ſo deſpair will make the lighteſt evil, a burden too heavy to be borne: how much more then, muſt it needs aggravate the aſtoniſhing torments of hell!

Can there ſtill be any farther addition to the pangs and torments of the damned?—Yes—The ſelf condemnation and rebukes of the ſinner's own conſcience. The almighty dooms none but hardened and impenitent ſinners to everlaſting torment, and never paſſes an irreverſible decree of puniſhment on them till the meaſure of their iniquities is full. So that this will be the condemnation which every ſinner will be expoſed to, that he has ruined and deſtroyed himſelf: and when he is rolling about, reſtleſs and impatient in the flames

flames of hell, he will ſtill be aggravating his torments with ſuch ſtinging thoughts as theſe: Whatever I endure here, I can juſtly blame no one but myſelf for it. I have brought this everlaſting deſtruction upon myſelf. I was obſtinately ſet upon the vicious courſe of life, which brought me hither. And after I had ſinned and deſerved theſe torments, there was mercy offered me, upon condition of my ſincere repentance; but I refuſed it. I have ſold my ſoul alas! for an empty ſhadow. Oh how vain, how worthleſs, how unſatisfactory were thoſe gilded trifles falſely called pleaſures, for which I have incurred my damnation! if all the kingdoms of the world, and the utmoſt glory of them had been laid at my feet, and I could have enjoyed them all for as many millions of years as there are ſands on the ſea ſhore; yet I had been a fool, if even this would have tempted me to make myſelf everlaſtingly miſerable! What then am I now, who for a momentary and imaginary enjoyment of but a very ſmall portion of the world have plunged myſelf headlong into a ſea of everlaſting torments?

Thus will the condemned ſinner's conſcience laſh and torment itſelf. And in hell theſe laſhes and rebukes will give him no intermiſſion; becauſe they will continually be provoked and edged with the miſeries which ſhall there endure for ever, without the leaſt abatement.

There is no miſtake more pernicious and fatal in its conſequences to mankind, than their unwarrantable dependance on God's infinite goodneſs and mercy, notwithſtanding the ſacred ſcriptures abound with ſo many awful and repeated menaces denounced againſt all ſtubborn and impenitent ſinners. It is this ill grounded hope of God's pardon and forgiveneſs at laſt, that tempts and encourages ſo many to lead the moſt profligate and abandoned lives. For, were they not unhappily prepoſſeſt by ſome ſuch deceitful deluſion, it is hardly to be conceived, that any one could be ſo preſumptuous and void of reaſon, as to run the riſk of eternal damnation.

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Did theſe poor infatuated wretches in reality believe, that everlaſting torments would be the woeful reſult of their repeated ſins, I am fully convinced that there is no man, endowed with the leaſt degree of reaſon, but would ſeriouſly reflect on his danger, and reſolve on an immediate reformation; no one in his ſenſes but would be in the greateſt agonies of mind, till he had ſome well-grounded hopes of avoiding ſo aſtoniſhing, ſo dreadful, and ſo irretrievable a diſaſter.

It is our duty, therefore, at proper ſeaſons, though none, it is true, can well be deemed altogether improper, to uſe our beſt endeavours to open men's eyes, and give them timely notice of the imminent danger to which they are expoſed. The generality of mankind, though I am ſorry to make the obſervation, in this part of the world at leaſt, ſeem to be ſunk into an abſolute inſenſibility as to this great and important truth. Men were, doubtleſs, as wiſe in former ages as they are at preſent, and how many of thoſe, of the deepeſt learning and the brighteſt parts, rejoiced to be called out to ſuffer whatever the malice and cruelty of their mortal enemies could poſſibly deviſe, from a full conviction, that they ſhould be happy to all eternity in another world, and that the ſhameful denial of their faith would prove an inevitable bar to their everlaſting felicity. Too ſure it is that the infliction of an everlaſting puniſhment upon hardened and impenitent ſinners is perfectly conſiſtent with God's impartial juſtice, notwithſtanding that mercy and patience are pronounced in the ſacred ſcriptures to be his darling attributes.

And this, I conceive, will appear beyond all contradiction, from the following conſideration, namely,

That nothing can be inconſiſtent with God's juſtice, and goodneſs, with which his truth, his wiſdom, his holineſs, or any other of his attributes demands a compliance. And the reaſon is plain and obvious, ſince there is a moſt exact harmony among all God's

perfections, which can never interfere with each other, but muſt move conſiſtently together. God is not only juſt, but good to all his creatures in general; but then, he always exerciſes his juſtice, and extends his mercy and loving-kindneſs, according to the expreſs tenour of his threats and promiſes; and as ſhall ſuit beſt with the wiſdom of his providence, and conduce moſt to his honour and glory.

And in the caſe now before us, he has expreſly and ſolemnly declared, in various places of ſcripture, that he will puniſh the wicked with eternal torments. And, as it is not to be expected, that God ſhould recede from the moſt poſitive, and peremptory declarations of his will, ſo it cannot be conceived, that he ſhould make any ſuch declaration, if it were either an act of injuſtice or cruelty to carry his menaces into execution. For this would ſet God's veracity at variance with his juſtice, and goodneſs: no objection, therefore, can lie againſt an eternity of torments, if God Almighty ſees fit to inflict it, unleſs the reaſon of that objection be ſomething more evident and undeniable, than all the declarations of ſcripture on the other ſide of the queſtion. And ſuch a reaſon, I dare venture to aſſert, can no where be met with.

Thus again, if God has threatened ſinners with everlaſting puniſhment, the only motive to that menace muſt be, to lay an effectual reſtraint upon men's paſſions, and keep them within the bounds of their obedience, by the awful proſpect of endleſs miſery. And, who can ſay, that this is not a very wiſe, and conſiderate motive, and every way worthy of a juſt, and a merciful God? But if, upon a nearer ſcrutiny, it ſhould appear to be inconſiſtent with God's juſtice, or mercy, even to execute that puniſhment which he has threatened; and if men were, as they that object to it pretend, at leaſt, to be, aware of this inconſiſtency; then this wiſe proviſion would in reality defeat itſelf; it would render God's authority little leſs than mean and contemptible; and conſidering the

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hardneſs of men's hearts, it would it is to be feared, make them but ſtill more ſecure, and preſumptuous in their ſins; ſo that God could not threaten ſinners with eternal death wiſely, unleſs he could do it juſtly: but having done it, he muſt be owned to do it both juſtly and wiſely; for otherwiſe, his truth, his wiſdom, and his juſtice, would claſh and interfere with one another.

Once more, ſince there is an infinite contrariety between the purity and holineſs of God, and the depravity of a ſinner; and ſince all ſin includes ſome puniſhment ſuitable to its nature; and ſince no ſinner, who wilfully ſo continues, and wretchedly ſo departs, can be cleanſed from his pollutions after death; it follows, that all ſuch, if they be liable to be puniſhed at all, as indiſputably they are, muſt be alſo liable to eternal puniſhment; becauſe, in God's purer eyes, they will always be looked upon as moſt hardened and impenitent ſinners; and as ſuch, they are totally excluded from all hopes of favour, and muſt for ever remain the accurſed objects of his higheſt, and moſt juſt diſpleaſure. How, therefore, can that puniſhment be alledged as inconſiſtent with the divine juſtice and goodneſs, which not only God's immutable truth, and unerring wiſdom, but even his eſſential purity and holineſs, and inflexible juſtice, do as it were claim at his hands, as being abſolutely neceſſary to vindicate his own honour and impartial right to all his perfections? But the nature of man, if conſidered and compared with that condition which he has brought himſelf into by ſin, will be a farther vindication of the divine juſtice and goodneſs, in the infliction of eternal torments.

For man is naturally immortal, I mean, as to the more conſiderable part of him, his ſoul; which was ſo framed by God, as not to be ſubject to corruption, or diſſolution. To pain and ſorrow, indeed it is; and of all ſorrows none ſo keen, none ſo piercing, as that of a wounded ſpirit, labouring under the heavy load of unexpiated guilt, and diſtracted with the dreadful apprehenſions of en-

ſuing vengeance. And the man that dies with theſe awful terrors upon him, muſt of neceſſity be miſerable for ever and ever. For an immortal ſpirit muſt ſubſiſt to all eternity; and a damned ſpirit muſt ſuffer eternally; becauſe, ſo long as it exiſts, it always carries the cruel cauſe of its own miſery within itſelf: for the worm of conſcience which never dies, gnaws inwardly; and, it muſt be a perpetual ſource of uninterrupted torment to the ſoul, that finds and feels itſelf in this moſt deplorable ſtate and condition, to be ſtill either looking up with deſpairing eyes towards that happineſs, which he has forfeited, and is now quite out of his reach; or elſe, looking downwards, with horror, into that abyſs of miſery, which no duration can exhauſt, nor hope diminiſh; becauſe it is, and muſt be as durable as its very eſſence. Since, therefore, ſuch is the nature of man, as created by God, and ſince ſuch is his condition, as impaired by ſin; it cannot be imputed to any want of juſtice, or goodneſs in God, that ſinners ſhould ſuffer everlaſting torment. This, I ſay, cannot be imputed to him; unleſs it were an act of injuſtice, to endow them with immortal ſouls at firſt, or an inſtance of juſtice to make them mortal again at laſt, even contrary to the very frame of their natures, leſt when they might have been for ever happy, they ſhould, through their own tranſgreſſion, become miſerable to all eternity.

If it be conſidered, therefore, after all, that this is no other than the neceſſary effect, and unavoidable conſequence of their own fooliſh and perverſe choice; God muſt be clear of all injuſtice and cruelty, when he adjudgeth ſuch obſtinate ſinners to eternal torments. If, indeed, men had been kept in a total ignorance of heaven and hell; if they never had any real motives to be good, and were never diſcouraged from purſuing their iniquitous practices; if they had been under a fatal determination, without any will or liberty of their own, for their guidance and direction; or, if they had been deſtitute of all power of themſelves, or aſſiſtance from

from above, either to attain to that happineſs, which is held out to them only in mockery, and at a diſtance; or, to avoid that miſery, upon the precipice of which they are continually walking; I ſay, had theſe been their hard circumſtances, the rigour had been moſt extreme, and there had been not only ſome colour, but juſt reaſon for complaint. Since life, however, and death is fairly ſet before them, ſince the invitation, on the one hand, is no leſs than that of an infinite reward, and the terror, on the other, no leſs than that of an infinite puniſhment; ſince they are left to their own freedom, either to chuſe, or to refuſe; and, ſince, beſides their own natural deſire of happineſs and averſion to miſery, they have the promiſe of ſupernatural grace to ſanctify, and cleanſe them, and prepare them for glory: I ſay, if under all theſe advantages, they are ſo unhappy as to miſcarry at laſt, they muſt charge God as fooliſhly, as they deſtroy themſelves, if they preſume to aſſert that he is either unjuſt, or ſevere, for ſuffering them to inherit that portion which belongs unto them, even the fatal effects of their own folly and miſconduct. Upon an impartial eſtimate, the ſeverity of God's menaces is ſo far from being any imputation upon his infinite mercy and forbearance, that it is indeed, the moſt illuſtrious demonſtration of them. For his manifeſt intention herein, is not to conclude men under ſin, or hurry them into deſpair; but to frighten them out of it, and awaken them to repentance. And the more loud, and ſhocking to nature theſe warnings are, the more indulgence and mercy there is in them. For, it ſhews, how tender God is of the welfare of his creatures, and how exceedingly deſirous he is of their happineſs; that leſt the more ingenuous principle of love, or even hope, ſhould prove ineffectual, he has ſpoke aloud to their fear, in order to imprint on their minds a due ſenſe of their danger; that they might be ſaved, by ſome means or other.

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I am firmly perſuaded, from theſe general reflections which we have here collected, if you will but add them together, and take them into your moſt ſerious conſideration, that you will clearly perceive that it cannot be inconſiſtent with God's juſtice, or goodneſs, to inflict eternal puniſhment upon obſtinate, and incorrigible ſinners.

But, leſt it ſhould be thought, that an objection drawn up in form, might be able to overthrow all that has been hitherto advanced; let us try the ſtrength of that which ſtands in our way. And I know of but one that deſerves an anſwer, and that is, that the principal end of all puniſhment is to reclaim offenders; but in hell there is no repentance, no poſſibility of amendment, and for that reaſon, the torments of hell are cruel and unjuſt. But, by the way, this is no objection againſt eternal puniſhment; but rather againſt any puniſhment at all in another world. All the little difficulty, however, that ſeems to occur, will be eaſily cleared up, by the aid and aſſiſtance of a very obvious, but neceſſary diſtinction; namely, that the end of puniſhments, in regard to this life, and that which is to come, is widely diſtant. In this life the immediate intention of thoſe temporal judgments, which God actually inflicts, and even of thoſe future puniſhments, which he terribly threatens, is to bring ſinners to repentance, and to work out their reformation. But if, notwithſtanding theſe methods of diſcipline, they are reſolutely bent to live and die in the gratification of their unruly appetites, they effectually defeat God's gracious purpoſe, and render themſelves incapable of the favour he intended them. This, however, hinders not, but that God may, and indeed cannot but ſhew the ſevereſt marks of his indignation, againſt ſuch profligate wretches; even for his own honour's ſake, and for the demonſtration of his juſt abhorrence and deteſtation of the leaſt ſin whatever. And this is the ultimate end of all puniſhments in the next life; which is then at laſt carried into execution, when the

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ſtate of the ſinner is remedileſs and irretrievable. And ſure, it can be no unrighteouſneſs in God, to make thoſe men the everlaſting monuments of his vengeance in hell, who once preſumptuouſly bid him defiance; and becauſe judgment was not executed ſpeedily againſt them, regarded not his menaces, nor ſeemed under apprehenſion of his avenging wrath. No; even this laſt act of inexorable juſtice will clearly approve itſelf to all the bleſſed company of ſaints, and angels, who will ſee abundant reaſon, not only to acquieſce in God's juſt proceedings, but alſo to glorify his peculiar mercy, that he ſhould deliver them from hell-torments, and eſtabliſh them in endleſs, and extatic bliſs.

And thus have we endeavoured to maintain and vindicate the truth of our propoſition, namely, that the execution of eternal puniſhment upon ſinners is conſiſtent with God's juſtice and goodneſs; againſt which, if there be any thing elſe that is material to be objected, beſides what we have taken notice of, we doubt not, but it may be eaſily reſolved upon the principles already laid down.

And now, upon the whole matter, ſince the caſe of perverſe and impenitent ſinners is ſo very helpleſs, and deplorable; ſince nothing can ſkreen them from God's avenging hand; ſince rocks, and mountains cannot hide them; ſince death itſelf ſhall flee from them, and annihilation afford no ſhelter; ſince their being ſhall for ever be continued, and made the ſeat and ſubject of everlaſting torments; ſince the mercy they have deſpiſed, ſhall, at laſt, deliver them up into the hand of juſtice, and the judge they have provoked, ſhall triumph over them without the leaſt eye of pity, in the day of vengeance: Let us take heed my brethren, leſt there ſhould remain in any of us an evil and unbelieving heart; let us take heed of cheriſhing any vain, or wicked thought, that may take off the edge of God's threatnings, and abate of their real terror; that may feed us with flattering hopes of finding relief, in hell itſelf, and of once ſeeing the period of endleſs miſery; or delude us with

with falſe notions of God's juſtice, and mercy, in derogation to his truth, his wiſdom, and holineſs; or that may any ways contribute towards our ſecurity or preſumption: In ſhort, let us not affront God's goodneſs, nor inſult his juſtice, by being over-officious to defend it. Let us not fence againſt hell-fire with ſubtleties, nor think to avoid everlaſting deſtruction, by raiſing objections againſt it; but let us conſider, that the great God, holy and true, is our judge, and our avenger; and in our meditations thereon, let us be afraid, and let us ſtand in awe, and ſin not; leſt he pluck us away, and there be none to deliver us.

And let us reflect ſeriouſly upon that vaſt eternity, into which we are launching, when once this tranſitory life is ended.

An eternity of happineſs, or an eternity of miſery! How ſurpriſing and tranſporting that! How amazing and confounded this! How boundleſs and unfathomable both! But let us lay theſe things to heart, and conſider our latter end: and let us conſider, if that be ſtill to be conſidered, which is moſt deſirable, eternal happineſs, or eternal miſery? And let us aſk this one ſerious and important queſtion, Would any man be content to purchaſe the moſt exquiſite pleaſures that refined Epicuriſm can poſſibly deviſe, for a ſeaſon, ſuppoſe the twentieth part of a ſhort life; I ſay, would any man be content with making ſuch a purchaſe, were he ſure to pay dearly for it all the reſt of his days, in the excrutiating pains of the gout or ſtone? And is it not a much more irrational choice, a much more unequal bargain for a man to take his portion of ſinful pleaſures, which can laſt but a very few years at longeſt; when he verily believes, and has too much reaſon to be ſure of this, and more, that he ſhall be tormented without intermiſſion, perhaps, for many revolutions of ages, with the moſt inexpreſſible anguiſh of ſoul, and the ſharpeſt bodily convulſions? And that too, in a place the moſt loathſome and forlorn, where darkneſs, even to be felt, ſhall be his habitation, intermingled with dreadful flaſhes of glaring light,

light, to fill his eyes with numberleſs ſad ſpectacles like himſelf; where ſulphureous ſtenches ſhall be for ever in his noſtrils, and hideous howlings ſhall rend his ears; where, in a word, the lamentations, and execrations of his fellow-ſufferers, ſhall aggravate and enhance his vexation, impatience, and amazement. It is a fearful thing, brethren, to fall into the hands of the living God.

But if we add eternity to the load of all theſe miſeries; O the confuſion, and deſpair of ſuch a reflection! To think, that after millions of millions of ages, and all that vaſt duration, which neither numbers can compute, or conception reach, the puniſhment will be but, as it were, beginning, and never, never likely to have an end; being perpetually ſupported by the ſad remembrance of what is paſt, imbittered by the intolerable anguiſh of what is preſent, and exaſperated to the laſt degree, by the dreadful expectation of what is ſtill coming, and will be always ſtill to come. The contemplation only of eternal miſery is a torment hardly to be expreſſed. In compaſſion to yourſelves, however, believe, or there is no way to eſcape ſo dreadful a denunciation.

Thus have we attempted to repreſent to you the future puniſhment of ſinners; and I doubt not but the ſketch muſt be deemed very imperfectly drawn; it is rather an outline than a finiſhed piece. Permit me therefore, before I quit the melancholy ſubject, to add one word or two of exhortation.

Conſider before you indulge yourſelves in any wicked practice, what may be the fatal conſequence of ſuch indulgence. May it not be the loſs of heaven, of a place in thoſe bleſſed manſions where joy and peace abound? May it not be the incurring as great damnation? Conſider then, ſhame, ruin and deſtruction here are the uſual wages of ſin, and if temporal deſtruction makes ſo ghaſtly a figure, how like a fiend muſt everlaſting deſtruction look! If the anguiſh of the ſoul, and the pains of the body be ſo tormenting, what will the deſtruction be of both body and

ſoul in hell? If a ſerpent gnawing in our bowels be a repreſentation of an inſupportable miſery here, what will that be of the worm that never dies? If a raging and devouring fire, which can laſt but till it hath conſumed a fading ſubſtance, be in its appearance ſo amazing, and in its pain ſo violent, how inexpreſſible will thoſe torments be that proceed from the wrath of an incenſed God, which ſhall burn like fire, and yet be everlaſting? Reflect then ſeriouſly on the important articles whilſt God gives you time to conſider of them; and think it an ineſtimable mercy that you have ſtill an hour left you to repent ſincerely of your ſins, to implore the divine favour and forgiveneſs to atone for your miſpent time, and to depart from your iniquities; to be fervent and frequent in prayer, to have a guard over all your actions; and in a word to be obedient and reſigned in all things to the will of God, your ever bleſſed Redeemer.

Finally brethren, our church has included in the ſervice of this day a moſt excellent and comfortable exhortation, admirably adapted to every ſtate of degenerate man. This exhortation we ſhall rehearſe with full aſſurance that it cannot but add great weight to what we have already ventured to offer to your ſerious thought and meditation, becauſe it ſpeaketh and denounceth the ſelf ſame things with full authority.

"Now ſeeing that all they are accurſed, as the prophet David "beareth witneſs, who do err and go aſtray from the command- "ments of God, let us, remembering the dreadful judgment hang- "ing over our heads, and always ready to fall upon us, return un- "to our Lord God with all contrition and meekneſs of heart; "bewailing and lamenting our ſinful life, acknowledging and con- "feſſing our offences, and ſeeking to bring forth worthy fruits of "penance. For now is the axe put unto the root of the trees, ſo "that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down "and caſt into the fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands "of the living God: he ſhall pour down rain upon the ſinners,

ſnares,

" ſnares, fire and brimſtone, ſtorm and tempeſt; this ſhall be their
" portion to drink. For lo, the Lord is come out of his place to
" viſit the wickedneſs of ſuch as dwell upon the earth. But who
" may abide the day of his coming? Who ſhall be able to endure
" when he appeareth? His fan is in his hand, and he will purge
" his floor, and gather his wheat into the barn, but he will burn
" the chaff with unquenchable fire. The day of the Lord cometh
" as a thief in the night: and when men ſhall ſay, peace, and all
" things are ſafe, then ſhall ſudden deſtruction come upon them, as
" ſorrow cometh upon a woman travailing with child, and they
" ſhall not eſcape. Then ſhall appear the wrath of God in the day
" of vengeance, which obſtinate ſinners, through the ſtubbornneſs
" of their heart, have heaped unto themſelves, which deſpiſed
" the goodneſs, patience, and long-ſufferance of God, when he
" called them continually to repentance. Then ſhall they call up-
" on me ſaith the Lord but I will not hear; they ſhall ſeek me
" early, but they ſhall not find me; and that becauſe they hated
" knowledge, and received not the fear of the Lord, but abhorred
" my counſel, and deſpiſed my correction. Then ſhall it be too
" late to knock when the door ſhall be ſhut; and too late to cry
" for mercy when it is the time of juſtice. O terrible voice of
" moſt juſt judgment which ſhall be pronounced upon them, when
" it ſhall be ſaid unto them, go ye curſed into the fire everlaſting,
" which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Therefore, bre-
" thren, take we heed betime, while the day of ſalvation laſteth;
" for the night cometh when none can work: but let us, while we
" have the light, believe in the light, and walk as children of the
" light, that we be not caſt into utter darkneſs, where is weep-
" ing and gnaſhing of teeth. Let us not abuſe the goodneſs of
" God, who calleth us mercifully to amendment, and of his endleſs
" pity promiſeth us forgiveneſs of that which is paſt, if with a
" perfect and true heart we return unto him. For though our ſins

" be as red as ſcarlet, they ſhall be made white as ſnow: and " though they be like purple, yet they ſhall be made white as " wool. Turn ye ſaith the Lord from all your wickedneſs, and " your ſins ſhall not be your deſtruction. Caſt away from you all " your ungodlineſs that ye have done, make you new hearts, and " a new ſpirit: wherefore will ye die, O ye houſe of Iſrael, ſeeing " that I have no pleaſure in the death of him that dieth, ſaith the " Lord God? Turn ye then, and ye ſhall live. Although we have " ſinned, yet have we an advocate with the father, Jeſus Chriſt the " righteous, and he is the propitiation for our ſins. For he was " wounded for our offences, and ſmitten for our wickedneſs. Let " us therefore return unto him, who is the merciful receiver of " all true penitent ſinners; aſſuring ourſelves that he is ready to " receive us, and moſt willing to pardon us, if we come unto him " with faithful repentance; if we will ſubmit ourſelves unto him, " and from henceforth walk in his ways; if we will take his eaſie " yoke, and light burden upon us, to follow him in lowlineſs, " patience, and charity, and be ordered by the governance of his " holy ſpirit, ſeeking always his glory and ſerving him duly in " our vocation with thankſgiving. This if we do, Chriſt will " deliver us from the curſe of the law, and from the extreme " malediction which ſhall light upon them that ſhall be ſet on the " left hand, and he will ſet us on his right hand, and give us the " gracious benediction of his father, commanding us to take poſſeſ- " ſion of his glorious kingdom: unto which he vouchſafes to bring " us all, for his infinite mercy. Amen."

SERMON

SERMON II.

For any SUNDAY in LENT.

The Duty, Safety and Wiſdom of Repentance.

JAMES V. 16.

CONFESS YOUR FAULTS ONE TO ANOTHER, AND PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER THAT YE MAY BE HEALED: THE EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILETH MUCH.

THOUGH it be evident from the portion of ſcripture now before us, that the apoſtle is here exhorting ſuch chriſtian converts as are viſited with ſickneſs, to confeſs their faults one to another, and aſſigns the reaſon for their ſo doing, namely, that they may be healed:—or in other words, —that their minds being made eaſy by the comfort of ſocial communications and advice; and their conſciences quieted by joining in fervent prayer with their pious relations and friends, —their cure may be rendered more ſpeedy and effectual;—yet this, ſaith our church is by no means to be underſtood as favouring

ing auricular confeſſion to a prieſt, it is only "a perſuaſion to "humility, whereby he willeth us to confeſs ourſelves generally "unto our neighbours, that we are ſinners, according to this ſay-"ing; if we ſay we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves and the truth "is not in us."—And though in the context it plainly appears, that the exhortation is directed to ſuch chriſtians likewiſe, as are any ways afflicted or diſtreſſed in mind body or eſtate,—for in the thirteenth verſe, preceding our text, his advice is to this effect; namely, improve every condition of life, be it either in health or in ſickneſs to a religious advantage, and if it prove the latter, let prayer be his refuge; for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Yet ſtill it is preſuppoſed that they have before truly repented of their ſins, and returned to God with a lively faith, and made their confeſſion to him in ſecret, as knowing without repentance, which is the gift of God, they could produce no ſuch good works as would be acceptable in his ſight.

In order therefore that we may have a more clear and perfect idea of the nature of repentance, we ſhall conſider this duty under ſeveral very intereſting and important branches.—In the firſt place it is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation that our repentance be ſincere.—That our ſorrow and contrition for thoſe ſins we have committed be hearty and unfeigned; that our grief be in earneſt. We muſt not only bewail our own folly and preſumption in deviating from the paths of virtue, and ruſhing into ſuch imminent danger of our future deſtruction; but our principal ſorrow muſt ariſe from our conſciouſneſs that we have in many inſtances offended that good and gracious Being who created heaven and earth and all things contained therein. An hearty and ſincere repentance, built on ſuch, our bounden duty, love and gratitude to the Almighty for his condeſcending goodneſs towards us, cannot fail of proving the moſt acceptable ſacrifice we can poſſibly offer. For the ſacrifices of God are,—as the pſalmiſt has aſſured us,—a broken ſpirit:—to which

he

he adds for our conſolation, a broken and contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not deſpiſe.

Sin however has ſuch a prevailing influence over thoſe who indulge themſelves in the gratification of their unwarrantable paſſions, that it not only captivates their reaſon and over-clouds their mental faculties, but it hardens their conſciences to ſuch a degree as to render them altogether inſenſible of the danger to which they are ſo unhappily expoſed.—There muſt be a power therefore, ſuperior to the dictates of their own weak underſtandings, that muſt give them ſuch a true ſenſe of their deplorable ſtate as to work in them ſuch a godly ſorrow and contrition as will inſure their eternal ſalvation.

The royal David, though a man after God's own heart, was not only guilty of crimes than which none could be greater, namely, adultery and murder, but expreſſed no tokens of remorſe till Nathan the prophet was ſent as a ſpecial meſſenger from God to awaken, to reprove, to puniſh him for thoſe vile tranſgreſſions whereby he had ſo grievouſly wounded his own ſoul, and had moreover given great occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme. Nothing doubtleſs but his unfeigned contrition and ſorrow could ever have reconciled him to God; nothing but his deep and ſincere repentance could ever have reſtored his peace, or procured him ſolid hope of pardon and forgiveneſs. This abundantly appears by his penitential pſalms, which will afford to after ages, to their inexpreſſible comfort and conſolation, a ſure memorial of God's extenſive mercy and goodneſs.

We therefore have no occaſion for any ſuch extraordinary meſſenger as Nathan was, to bring us to the duty of repentance, for we have the holy ſcriptures, and if we will but hear them, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt them, we cannot err ſo fatally becauſe the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged ſword. The influence of that word will touch and affect the heart, and convince

convince the moſt obſtinate and obdurate ſinner that he is ungrateful and altogether unworthy of God's favour and indulgence. It will ſet his folly and preſumption before his eyes in the ſtrongeſt point of light; it will ſhew him what hopes he had for mercy, and that by his own imprudence and miſconduct, thoſe hopes were juſtly forfeited; and will give him a due ſenſe of thoſe judgments which, without a ſincere and unfeigned repentance,—muſt devolve on his devoted head.

When Saint Peter preached to the multitude, we are told that the hearts and conſciences of his numerous hearers were wonderfully affected by the truth and energy of his words; and did but our hearts burn within us when we peruſe thoſe lively oracles which Jeſus Chriſt, his Apoſtles and Evangeliſts ſealed with their precious blood, they would open thoſe wounds which ſin has cauſed,—in order to their being perfectly and effectually healed. And indeed, the pains which we feel by virtue of thoſe wounds being ſo laid open, is the happieſt and moſt promiſing ſymptom we can have of our future and total cure.

When the ſoul is thus truly humbled, and fully convinced of the enormity of her paſt tranſgreſſions, and reflects on them with an unfeigned ſorrow and contrition, ſhe proſtrates herſelf immediately before that ſupreme Being ſhe has ſo highly offended, and acknowledges herſelf the juſt object of his divine anger, and thereupon, God is ſo merciful and ſo indulgent, that he is ready,—as the pſalmiſt expreſſes it,—to heal the broken in heart, and bind up their wounds.—And as the pſalmiſt was conſcious to himſelf that he had been preſumptuouſly guilty of ſins of the deepeſt dye, he purſued the very ſame meaſures, that he recommends in almoſt every page of his divine work; he humbled himſelf, he unfeignedly repented, and was moſt graciouſly forgiven. Hear therefore what he ſays, and follow his example. "I acknowledged my ſin unto thee, and "mine unrighteouſneſs have I not hid: I ſaid I will confeſs my

"tranſgreſſions

" tranſgreſſions unto the Lord, and thou forgaveſt the iniquity of " my ſin."

The ſame ſucceſs, the ſame aſſurance we may procure to ourſelves by conſulting the promiſes made to us under the goſpel diſpenſation. " If we confeſs our ſins, ſays St. John, God is faith- " ful and juſt to forgive us our ſins and to cleanſe us from all un- " righteouſneſs." The intention of ſuch a ſolemn and open confeſſion to God cannot be to inform him, for his all ſeeing eye penetrates into the ſecrets of our hearts; but it is to humble ourſelves, it is to bewail our frequent demerits, and to proſtrate ourſelves before him, in hope of mercy and forgiveneſs.

We are required likewiſe in the new teſtament,—particularly in the paſſage now before us,—when we labour under affliction, not only to acknowledge our tranſgreſſions unto God, but to confeſs our faults one to another, and pray one for another, that we may be healed. If the faults ſo to be confeſſed are ſuch as one neighbour commits againſt another, from whence too frequently proceed envy, hatred, malice, revilings, perſecutions, rage, reſentment and ſuch like. In theſe caſes indeed, the aggreſſor is in duty bound to confeſs to the perſon whom he has injured, the full extent of his offending. But if the words of our text be taken in a ſpiritual ſenſe, then the exhortation will be more general and may run thus :—" Be " not ſlow to confeſs to one another, not only that you are ſinners " againſt the divine majeſty, but that you have the ſame infirmities " as your neighbours have; that you are open and expoſed to the " ſame temptations; that you are conſcious how great a beam is in " your own eye, and therefore you forbear to point out the mote " you diſcern in your brother's eye." It is moreover a duty incumbent on all ſuch as profeſs themſelves penitents, jointly to beg each others prayers for the aid and aſſiſtance of God's holy ſpirit, to enable them to withſtand temptations, and to keep them unmoved and unſhaken in the day of trial. In a word, we ought jointly to pray

for one another, that notwithſtanding the weakneſs and frailties of our natures, we may all of us be made partakers of that redemption from ſin and ſlavery which Jeſus Chriſt purchaſed for us on the day of his crucifixion.

That our repentance may be ſafe and available, it is indiſpenſably neceſſary that a firm faith be added thereto. "He that be-"lieveth in me and repenteth ſhall be ſaved," ſaith our Saviour.—"So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon, to "the end that all that believe in him, ſhould not periſh, but have "ever-laſting life," ſaith St. John. This faith, or ſtedfaſt reliance on the divine promiſes for the free forgiveneſs of our ſins is the chief principle which ſets all the other parts of our repentance into motion, and renders them effectual. Judas himſelf repented, and yet we find he reaped no benefit therefrom. His contrition indeed, was ſo far hearty and ſincere as to make his life intolerable; nay more, it induced him to an open and public declaration to the chief prieſts, of his impious and ungrateful deportment towards his Lord and maſter. But this confeſſion was unavailable; for when in the bitter anguiſh of his ſoul, he told them—"I have ſinned in that I "have betrayed the innocent blood;" All the anſwer he could extort from them was,—"What is that to us? See thou to that."

We may here, with great propriety propoſe the following queſtion, Was the crime of thoſe who procured the condemnation of our bleſſed Lord, and purſued him with deſperate and determined malice to his croſs,—was their guilt leſs atrocious than that of Judas?—On the contrary, may we not obſerve that Judas made all the reſtitution that was in his power for his treacherous and wicked contract; he returned them the thirty pieces of ſilver, the poor recompence and reward which his avarice had tempted him to accept for his inhuman and perfidious miſconduct.—Now what was there wanting to render his repentance ſincere and unfeigned?—The anſwer may be plain and explicit;—it was his want of faith;

faith;—and through that defect, and that only, it ended in a raging fit of deſpair, and in his total ruin and deſtruction.—Our Saviour ſpeaking prophetically of the final end of this his reprobate follower, ſaith—"The ſon of man indeed goeth, as it is "written of him: but woe to that man by whom the ſon of "man is betrayed: good were it for that man if he had never "been born."

To contraſt this tranſaction and character let us delineate the dreadful apoſtacy of Peter.—His ſin doubtleſs was both heinous and ſhameful in the nature of it; he not only denied his maſter, but he confirmed that denial by the moſt impious oaths and execrations, recollecting however his infamous timidity and the previous notice our Lord himſelf had given him of ſuch deſertion, which rendered his crime ſtill more inexcuſable, he went out directly thereupon, and wept bitterly; that is, he lamented the complicated ſin he had been guilty of with every mark of godly ſorrow. Accordingly, he found favour and forgiveneſs; his denial being wholly attributed to the weakneſs and frailty of his human nature, againſt which at that particular juncture, he was not ſufficiently guarded.

Now there ſeems to be but very little difference between the repentance of the one, and the contrition of the other. Judas publicly announced not only his own ingratitude, but his Lord's innocence, and thereby demonſtrated that he was as much aſhamed of being a perfidious traitor, as Peter could be of his caſual want of courage and reſolution; and both were evidently ſincere in their ſorrow and remorſe. The eſſential difference which conſtituted its malignancy, aroſe from their after-conduct.—The deſponding Judas conceived ſuch an idea of the heinous nature of his crime, that he immediately concluded that there was no room even for hope of pardon and forgiveneſs; and in the height of deſpair and in contempt of the author and giver of life, added ſuicide to his ſin of in-

gratitude; daringly launching his ſoul into the abyſs of eternity with all his ſins upon his head; whereas the awakened Peter, though equally conſcious of the aggravating circumſtances of his guilt,—deſpaired not of mercy. This holy confidence encouraged him to teſtify every mark of a ſincere repentance;—to approach the throne of grace with unceaſing ſupplications till he had obtained the remiſſion of his ſin, and a happy and perfect reconciliation with his offended maſter.

From theſe paſſages and ſundry others of like import, weak or wicked men have taken occaſion to magnify faith in prejudice of good works.—Let it therefore here be well noted that faith without repentance is no better than ſounding braſs or a tinckling cymbal. Though I have all faith, exclaims the Apoſtle, ſo that I could remove mountains and have not charity,—that is, have not a genuine and liberal ſpirit of benevolence ſhewing itſelf in good works,—I am nothing.—Therefore it is abſolutely neceſſary that an immediate reformation of manners ſhould accompany faith as an infallible token of the truth and reality of our converſion. Indeed, ſuch as are ſincerely ſorry for their paſt offences, will as ſincerely be ready and willing to forſake them, and induſtriouſly ſhun all thoſe temptations which before betrayed them into the actual commiſſion of ſin and wickedneſs. They will reſolutely be bent to lead virtuous, innocent, and holy lives for the future; ſuch as ſhall render them acceptable in the ſight of God and beneficial to their fellow creatures. This is the genuine fruit of repentance, and we may find ſundry remarkable inſtances interſperſed throughout the ſacred ſcriptures of the happy conſequences inſtantaneouſly ſubſequent to ſuch a true and unfeigned converſion.

The firſt we ſhall mention is recorded by St. Luke of Zaccheus, who immediately on conviction of his unrighteouſneſs, "Stood, and ſaid unto the Lord, behold, Lord, the half of my "goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any "man

" man by falſe accuſation, I reſtore him four-fold." Now this was a ſelf evident teſtimony of his ſudden change, and a very praiſe worthy regard for doing juſtice to his injured neighbour; the ſincerity of his converſion was indeed unqueſtionable, for his pardon was inſtantly pronounced by his gracious Redeemer himſelf. " And Jeſus ſaid unto him, this day is ſalvation come to " this houſe."

The ſame Evangeliſt has given us another very remarkable inſtance of contrition and repentance; namely, of a woman,—generally ſuppoſed to be Mary Magdalen,—in whom ſuch a ſudden and effectual change was wrought, that ſhe not only forſook her evil ways, but during the courſe of her life became a moſt affectionate follower of our bleſſed Lord.

Various and preſſing exhortations, with comfortable promiſes annexed, we may likewiſe find interſperſed throughout the ſacred ſcriptures, for the encouragement of ſinners to engage without delay in this important work of a ſincere and laudable repentance. In the prophet Ezekiel we read of God's gracious invitation of the Iſraelites to a due diſcharge of this duty.—" Caſt away from you,—" ſaith he,—all your tranſgreſſions, whereby you have tranſgreſſed " againſt me, and make ye a new heart and a new ſpirit."—And in order to expreſs his paternal tenderneſs and affectionate concern for their future welfare, he adds to the above injunction, the indiſpenſable motive that ſhould induce them to comply therewith; namely, —" for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?"—How pathetic,—how perſuaſive this expreſſion!

Another very powerful inducement, diligently to ſet about an unfeigned repentance, is this; that be our ſins of ever ſo alarming a nature, yet if our ſorrow and contrition be ſincere we ſhall aſſuredly obtain forgiveneſs.—Our ever merciful and gracious God will bury our tranſgreſſions in everlaſting oblivion. Numberleſs are the paſſages both in the old and new teſtament, that might be adduced in

in confirmation of this aſſertion: ſo many indeed that to particulariſe them would be to ſuppoſe you totally ignorant or inattentive.

Could men but ſee,—ſaid the heathen philoſopher Plato,—the deformity of vice, they would deteſt and abhor it as much as they would poiſon itſelf: and doubtleſs, if a heathen could look upon the deviations from uprightneſs with ſuch an eye of contempt and mortal hatred, there are many conſiderations that ſhould render them much more odious and deteſtable in the eye of a chriſtian. We are taught that ſin is of ſo heinous a complexion that it inevitably creates a ſeperation between God and the ſouls of men. If an impenitent ſinner approaches the throne of grace, with petitions and interceſſions dreſſed in all the pomp of language and geſtures of humility, they will prove as fruitleſs as they are vain—for the God of purity and truth hides his face from ſuch unſanctified worſhippers;—he will not only withdraw his preſence from hypocritical trangreſſors in this world, but will exclude them from his preſence for ever in the world to come.

Suppoſe we were called to make our perſonal appearance before an earthly prince only, ſhould we not be peculiarly careful to lay aſide every thing that we imagined might give him diſtaſte or render us unacceptable? Doubtleſs we ſhould. How much more ſolicitous ought we to be to avoid giving offence to the ſupreme Being, the king of kings? However, if we paid but an equal regard to the latter as we ſhould do to the former, that argument alone would prove ſufficient to convince us of the abſolute neceſſity of our ſincere repentance for paſt tranſgreſſions, and for a viſible amendment of our lives in future.

Another ſerious and no leſs ſolemn motive to induce us to an unfeigned and early repentance is this, namely, the precarioufneſs and uncertainty of our lives. We cannot be aſſured of our abode here on earth, even for ſo much as one ſingle moment. How incumbent a duty is it therefore not to delay our repentance?—Be we young

young or old, in health or in ſickneſs, the point of wiſdom will be to make our calling and election ſure; that when our appointed hour is come, be it in the firſt or ſecond watch, we may with readineſs and chearfulneſs ſubmit to God's will and pleaſure, and depart this life with a comfortable certainty of being everlaſtingly happy in that which is to come.

If we have hitherto been careleſs and remiſs in this important affair of our repentance, we have abundant reaſon to ſhudder at the thought of departing this life ſo ill prepared for judgment. For after death has once ſeized upon us, our future ſtate and condition will be unalterably fixed. No petitions, no interceſſions can bias or reverſe the ſentence of our judge be it either for happineſs or miſery. Solomon aſſures us that as the tree falleth, whether it be towards the South, or towards the North, in the place where it falleth, there it ſhall be. The ſon of Sirach has alſo given us the following moſt judicious and prudential advice.—Make no tarrying,—ſaith he,—to turn to the Lord; and put not off from day to day; for ſudden ſhall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy ſecurity ſhalt thou be deſtroyed, and periſh in the day of vengeance.

Whenever therefore we perceive within ourſelves the leaſt inclination or thought of entering upon that important duty, whether through the happy influence of reading the ſacred ſcriptures ourſelves, or through the hearing pathetick diſcourſes from the pulpit, let us obey with chearfulneſs thoſe firſt motions of God's ſpirit, for it is an unpardonable act of preſumption barely to imagine that God ſhould wait our leiſure, and continue the tenders of his grace till we find ourſelves inclined to embrace his offers.

The laſt motive we ſhall mention to ſtimulate us to enter immediately upon the duty of repentance, and a newneſs of life conſequent thereupon, is the conſideration of thoſe heavy judgments which

which hang over the devoted heads of all perverſe and impenitent ſinners.—Let us us then ſeriouſly apply to ourſelves the divine menaces which the prophets have heretofore denounced againſt all ſuch as were hardened in their iniquities; who declined all thoughts of repentance, and were reſolutely bent at all adventures to indulge their irregular and inordinate deſires. "I will deliver them,—ſaith "the Lord, to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, for their "hurt; to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curſe in all "places whither I ſhall drive them; and I will ſend the ſword, the "famine and the peſtilence among them, till they be conſumed off "the land that I gave unto them, and to their fathers."—How trivial, however, how infinitely ſhort are even thoſe very dreadful temporal afflictions,—if we make the compariſon,—to thoſe more tremendous torments, which are reſerved for them in a future ſtate; of theſe torments the apoſtle St. Paul ſpeaks very emphatically in his addreſs to the Romans. "After their hardneſs, ſays he, and their "impenitent heart, they treaſure up to themſelves wrath againſt "the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of "God."

Now dearly beloved, let theſe terrors of the Lord prevail;—let us conſult our eternal felicity; let us not delay one moment ſo important a duty as our repentance, and our reſolution to amend our lives, knowing that the conſequences of our neglect will prove ſo very fatal; eſpecially ſince we have all the encouragement reaſonable Beings can wiſh, to ſet about it in very earneſt. For if we will but embrace the offers of God's mercy upon the eaſy terms preſcribed in the goſpel,—that is, if we will but reſt our faith on Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour, and ſincerely repent of our paſt tranſgreſſions, his precious blood, which was ſhed for the ſalvation of a ſinful world, will cleanſe us from all iniquity: and in conſequence of that faith and truſt which we repoſe in him, he will not only give us all ſuch good things as he ſhall ſee moſt fit and convenient for us in this life,

life, but will crown our obedience with eternal glory and happineſs in that which is to come.

" Do thou then almighty and everlaſting God, who hateſt " nothing that thou haſt made, and doſt forgive the ſins of all " them that are penitent; create and make in us new and " contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our ſins and ac- " knowledging our wretchedneſs, may obtain of thee, the God " of all mercy, perfect remiſſion and forgiveneſs, through Jeſus " Chriſt our Lord. Amen."

SERMON III.

For any SUNDAY in LENT.

The Apoſtacy of St. Peter.

MATTHEW XXVI. 74, 75.

THEN BEGAN HE TO CURSE AND TO SWEAR, SAYING I KNOW NOT THE MAN. AND IMMEDIATELY THE COCK CREW.
AND, PETER REMEMBERED THE WORDS OF JESUS, WHICH SAID UNTO HIM, BEFORE THE COCK CROW, THOU SHALT DENY ME THRICE. AND HE WENT OUT, AND WEPT BITTERLY.

THE generality of mankind are greatly influenced, both in reſpect to virtue and vice by the behaviour of their ſuperiors. Examples will frequently allure, where precepts prove altogether ineffectual. For which reaſon, the penmen, both of the old and new Teſtament, who were equally under the immediate inſpiration of the holy ſpirit, have thought proper, with the utmoſt impartiality, to record the ſinful and atrocious actions, as well as the excellencies and perfections of ſome of the moſt illuſtrious Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apoſtles, and ſet them before us in the ſtrongeſt point of light, in order to recommend the latter,

and deter their poſterity, for ſucceeding generations, from the imitation of the former. It would be eaſy to collect a variety of inſtances applicable to the above aſſertion, but we apprehend that one only will ſerve our preſent purpoſe, namely, the remarkable Apoſtacy of St. Peter which you will find recorded by St. Matthew in the following words. "Now Peter ſat without in the palace: and "a damſel came unto him, ſaying, thou alſo waſt with Jeſus of "Galilee. But he denied before them all, ſaying, I know not "what thou ſayeſt. And when he was gone out into the porch, "another maid ſaw him, and ſaid unto them that were there, this "fellow was alſo with Jeſus of Nazareth. And again he denied "with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came "unto him they that ſtood by, and ſaid to Peter, ſurely thou alſo "art one of them, for thy ſpeech bewrayeth thee. Then began he "to curſe and to ſwear, ſaying, I know not the man. And imme-"diately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the words of "Jeſus, which ſaid unto him, before the cock crow, thou ſhalt "deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly."

For divers affecting reaſons St. Peter ought to have been the laſt perſon of all the Apoſtles, that ſhould have been guilty of ſuch an act of cowardice; becauſe he could claim pre-eminence from a long and intimate connexion with our bleſſed Lord. He had not only the benefit and advantage of hearing our Saviour's repeated lectures in public, but had frequent opportunities of diſcourſing with him in private, upon the doctrines he advanced, and of procuring a ſatisfactory explication of any myſterious article, that his maſter thought proper to communicate in dark and obſcure terms, to the multitudes who flocked round him for inſtruction.

Again, this St. Peter had ſtill greater indulgencies ſhewn him even than thoſe before mentioned; for he had not only occular demonſtration of the ſeveral miracles, which our bleſſed Lord had wrought in the ſtreets, markets and ſynagogues for the confirmation of the truth

truth of his heavenly miſſion, but was honoured ſo far as to be eye witneſs of ſuch other miracles before the choſen few, as were ſelf-evident proofs of his maſter's divinity, power and authority. He was, for inſtance, preſent with him at his transfiguration, when he ſaw Moſes and Elias with the angelic choir that ſurrounded them; who appeared in glory, and ſpake of his deceaſe which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem. He was alſo ear witneſs, as he himſelf confeſſes, of the voice of the almighty, when he declared out of the cloud, that Jeſus Chriſt was his beloved ſon in whom he was well pleaſed.

As a farther teſtimony of our Saint's being a peculiar favourite; when his gracious maſter was overwhelmed with grief, and in ſuch inexpreſſible agonies as to ſweat drops of blood, this choſen follower was permitted to be preſent in the garden with him, in that hour of affliction and diſmay.

How heinous, how amazing, how complicated then the crime in St. Peter to deny this gracious Lord from whence he, not long before, had received a particular benediction for his ingenuous and open confeſſion, that he was the ſon of God! How inexcuſable was ſuch a lapſe in him, ſeeing alſo that he had been forewarned by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf of the fatal conſequences of a ſimilar crime which is thus recorded by St. Mark. "But when he had "turned about, and looked on his diſciples, he rebuked Peter, ſay-"ing, get thee behind me Satan: for thou ſavoureſt not the things "that be of God, but the things that be of men," and ſoon after added as a concluſion of the whole matter—"Whoſoever therefore "ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and "ſinful generation, of him ſhall the ſon of man be aſhamed when "he cometh in the glory of his father, with the holy angels."

But what is ſtill a further aggravation of his crime, he had publicly declared that very ſame evening, that he was not only ready, but willing to undergo for his ſake any tortures that could be inflicted

flicted upon him:—that the terrors of a dungeon ſhould have no influence over him; but that if occaſion offered, he would chearfully lay down his life in vindication of his cauſe; that if all his Apoſtles ſhould be offended, yet he would never be offended; never leave or forſake him: though I ſhould die with thee,—averred he with the utmoſt warmth and vehemence,—yet will I not deny thee in any wiſe. And who, indeed, could doubt of the ſincerity of his intentions, when he gave ſuch a deſperate and dangerous evidence of his fidelity and affection, as not only to draw his ſword, but actually to wound one of the officers who attempted to apprehend his beloved maſter. Now after all this boaſted conſtancy, this undaunted courage; notwithſtanding the raſh attempt he had made to reſcue his Lord and patron; yet this very identical St. Peter falls off in the time of trial, and not only diſclaims all intimacy or correſpondence with ſuch a man as Jeſus, but even affirms that he never till that moment beheld him. "Now Peter ſat without in the palace; and "a damſel came unto him ſaying, thou alſo waſt with Jeſus of "Galilee. But he denied before them all, &c. &c."

Since then this ſhameful Apoſtacy, this wicked denial was an act of more flagrant ingratitude in St. Peter than it would have been in any other of the Apoſtles, as we have ſufficiently proved already; let us proceed to enquire into the motives that might poſſibly induce him to be guilty of ſuch a total rejection of his late revered Lord. Now it is evident that the real cauſe of his miſcarriage was a ſudden reflection on the apparent danger to which he was at that juncture expoſed, in caſe he had given the damſel an anſwer in the affirmative.—Fear is a paſſion, it muſt be allowed, that is interwoven in our very natures; and ſelf-preſervation is not only the firſt, but the loudeſt dictate of humanity. When once this paſſion has got poſſeſſion of the ſoul, it is too apt to confound and overbear the judgment. No weakneſs of mind has ſuch prevalence over us; and where our apprehenſions of danger are well grounded,

no

no infirmity is more excuſeable, for we plainly perceive that the braveſt and moſt intrepid minds are not totally exempted from this paſſion; and as it is implanted in our natures, God Almighty, who made us, and knows our frailty, will, no doubt, take compaſſion on us, and make gracious allowances in this particular.

This fear, however, of St. Peter's, as it aroſe from no ſudden ſtarting accident, will not well admit of palliation; more eſpecially as our Lord himſelf had frequently foretold him, that ſuch afflictions would befal him; and moreover had enjoined his Diſciples in general, to be prepared for, and to live in expectation of, ſuch trials. Beſides, Peter had often been told by his maſter that the firſt planters of the goſpel, ſuch as himſelf, and the reſt of the Apoſtles, ſhould meet, not only with indignities and inſults, but with corporeal grievances, with confinement in priſons and in dungeons, as the reſult of their miniſterial function:—that they ſhould be ſummoned before kings, governors and ſanhedrims for his name ſake; and that whenever they found themſelves in this predicament, they ſhould be afraid of no one. "I ſay unto you my friends, be "not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no "more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you "ſhall fear:—fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to "caſt into hell; yea I ſay unto you fear him." Now this, one would imagine, ſhould have animated rather than have caſt St. Peter down; notwithſtanding his life had actually laid at ſtake. That was not, however, his caſe. He ſaw his maſter it is true in the hands of wicked men, but he himſelf was under no perſonal calamity; and notwithſtanding he might naturally expect to meet with the like ſevere treatment, ſome time or other, yet his ſufferings were all to come. He had not as yet been ſo much as called to any account, but was in the palace only as an indifferent by-ſtander. Some of the inferior domeſticks, indeed, might probably ſuſpect him to be one of the chriſtian party, and officiouſly put the

queſtion

queſtion to him; but one would imagine, that he would either have turned a deaf ear to any ſuch impertinent inquiry, or looked down on a ſilly maid ſervant with an eye of contempt:—but inſtead of that,—he,—who had been ſo intrepid as to draw his ſword amidſt a band of armed men,—is now ſo totally diſconcerted by vulgar perſons who had no ſort of title to call him to account, that he labours to demonſtrate that their ſurmiſes concerning him were altogether groundleſs, and endeavours very diſingenuouſly to wipe out their ſuſpicions by abſolute and ſcandalous untruths. His repeated and unneceſſary declarations of his having no knowledge of the man, was a very provoking aggravation of his guilt.—It is very probable indeed that a tender concern for the unhappy ſituation of his maſter's affairs might firſt induce him to be preſent in the high-prieſt's palace, that he might ſee the end, as St. Matthew expreſſes it; that is, that he might hear whether his maſter ſhould be condemned or releaſed. It is plain, however, that he, over officiouſly, threw himſelf into the way of danger; for he might have been abſent if he had thought proper. When he was once gone out, aſſuredly he had no occaſion to have returned; yet ſtill he did, and continued his aſſeverations, time after time; and thus one falſehood was added to confirm a former, and the laſt more vehement than the firſt. "Then began he to curſe and to ſwear, ſaying, I know "not the man." Now what could poſſibly be more dreadful than to hear a man call God to be a witneſs to ſo groſs a lie? Such were the deplorable circumſtances of our Apoſtle's moſt ſhameful fall, ſuch was the impious deportment of this illuſtrious Saint! And, doubtleſs, the holy ſpirit has thought proper to tranſmit to the lateſt poſterity, the failings of this boſom companion of our bleſſed Lord, as an everlaſting memorial, that the wiſeſt and beſt of men are ſometimes guilty of the moſt unaccountable errors, and that nothing but the ſincereſt repentance can reconcile them to an offended Deity.

Here

Here let us pauſe,—and ſeek a leſſon of inſtruction.

From hence then we may learn that man, unaſſiſted by the grace of God, is ſo far from being perfect, that he is deſpicably weak and wretched. Who ſhall from henceforth preſume to rely on the higheſt degree of knowledge, when he reflects that St. Peter, ſo wiſe a man, and withal ſo fully convinced of the truth of the chriſtian religion, ſhould, notwithſtanding the fulleſt conviction, and the ſtrongeſt rebukes of his own conſcience, be prevailed on, not only to deny, but abjure his Lord and Saviour.

From this ſhameful Apoſtacy of our Apoſtle we may alſo learn to conſult our own ſafety, by keeping as much as poſſible out of the reach of temptation. Our Saint you find might have avoided his miſcarriage, had he but acted with common prudence, had he but declined the temptation. When we make our addreſſes to the throne of grace, we are enjoined by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, to implore the divine goodneſs not to lead us into temptation. It is highly requiſite therefore that we ſhould be humble and diffident of our own ſtrength; that we uſe our utmoſt efforts to give a check to the violence of every riſing paſſion; and though we may ſeem to have ſubdued and got the maſtery of it, let us take heed leſt we provoke it to riſe up in rebellion againſt us; for when men have not the grace of God for their ſupport, they are hurried, as it were, down the impetuous torrent, and let themſelves drive ſo far till at laſt they are immerſed in the gulph of ſin and miſery.

Seeing then that the beſt inſtituted, the beſt informed of mortals are liable to dreadful errors and miſcarriages, let the candid and ingenuous chriſtian learn to be peculiarly tender of the reputation of his brethren. Whenever he ſuſpects they have acted amiſs, let him neither deſpiſe them, nor be too ſevere in his cenſures; for if their temptations and trials had been his own, is it not highly probable he would have run into the ſame condemnation?—Let him therefore that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.

If, from this diſgraceful period of our Apoſtle's hiſtory, we turn our eyes to the conſequences of his honeſt repentance; the proſpect will afford us delight and comfort in our ſpiritual warfare, in our progreſs through this vale of tears. For, as the aſtoniſhing and deplorable lapſe of this moſt eminent Saint, as the ungrateful deſertion of his Lord and maſter in the hour of danger and calamity was not only ſudden and unexpected, but attended with ſuch aggravating circumſtances, as gradually concluded in blaſphemy itſelf; ſo was his deep and ſincere contrition for his impious deportment equally ſudden and conſpicuous, and equally attended with ſuch peculiar circumſtances, as are in all reſpects worthy the devout chriſtian's moſt ſerious attention. There are ſome ſtriking incidents which though not actually expreſſed, yet may be very fairly and naturally deduced from the relation of St. Matthew, when compared with the other evangelical accounts of this important tranſaction.

The firſt we would recal to your remembrance is that of our Apoſtle's recollecting himſelf on the crowing of the cock.—St. Mark affirms that the cock crowed twice, and that our fallen Saint had heard the firſt warning without the leaſt impreſſion. St. Luke aſſigns an adequate reaſon for his more peculiar regard to the ſecond ſummons—namely, that his Lord and maſter in the midſt of his own ſufferings, conceived a tender feeling for the frailty of his unhappy follower. He turned and looked upon Peter with the eye of pity and affection,—not of anger and reſentment. In this point of view we may eaſily account for ſuch an immediate change; ſuch a ſudden converſion of the apoſtate reſolution of duty and allegiance. This gracious look awakened him to ſuch a recollection of his crime, as rendered him deteſtable to himſelf, and compelled him to burſt out into a profuſion of tears. For then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, ſays St. Luke;—which confirms what St. Matthew in our text obſerves, namely, Peter remembered the words of

Jeſus,

Jeſus, which ſaid unto him, before the cock crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice;—and he went out, and wept bitterly.

This glance of our Lord's eye upon our Apoſtle, this mild, this ſilent reproof of his much injured-maſter, falling in ſo ſeaſonably with the crowing of the cock, was ſuch a ſhock to his conſcience, as nothing could carry an equal weight with it. The moſt poignant language in the world would not have conveyed ſuch ſelf-reproach.

The next natural conſequence of this recollection, this ſting of conſcience that tormented him, was this; namely, he went and wept bitterly. So ſudden and ſo extreme was his concern for his miſconduct, that he could ſtay in the hall no longer, but withdrew abruptly, and ſought out ſome more private and proper place, in in which he might give his paſſion vent without reſtraint.

Now, as it is not in the power of words to expreſs the inward pain, which this penitential Saint felt on this melancholy occaſion, ſo neither can imagination make room to entertain an adequate idea of it. The pſalmiſt very emphatically aſks the following queſtion, "A wounded ſpirit who can bear?" And we may add, who can deſcribe the anguiſh? It is neither to be borne, nor delineated in its ſtrongeſt colours, by the fineſt ſtrokes of elocution. The compaſſionate and endearing look, the kind and ſolemn concern which his maſter expreſſed in order to his reformation, muſt, doubtleſs, add an inexpreſſible weight to his abhorrence of himſelf for the commiſſion of a ſin of ſo black a complexion. For there is nothing more naturally apt to melt and ſoften a man's ſtubborn heart, nothing more likely to bring him effectually to a due ſenſe of his own vileneſs and ingratitude, than an unexpected, and altogether undeſerved favour received from one, who has been moſt ſhamefully deſpiſed and contemned. And let me aſk you, what higher in dignity, what greater affront could St. Peter put upon his maſter, than not only to diſown him thus cowardly, falſely, and repeatedly,

peatedly, but to abjure him alſo, with horrid oaths and impious imprecations?

We ſhall make but one obſervation more, in regard to this eminent Apoſtle's repentance, which though not hinted in the text, is highly requiſite to be taken notice of, and that is, the ample compenſation which he afterwards made for all the diſgrace and ſcandal which this fall, this deſertion of his maſter, this abjuration of him in ſo vehement a manner, could poſſibly reflect either on himſelf, or on the chriſtian religion which he profeſſed. For not long after this happy change, this thorough converſion was wrought in our Apoſtle, we find, that his former courage and intrepidity revived, and his affection and zeal for his deceaſed maſter was more conſpicuous and ardent than ever it had been before. How did he exert himſelf on the day of Pentecoſt, and with what undaunted courage and reſolution did he aſſert the reſurrection, and the godhead of his Redeemer, whom he had before ſo ſhamefully abjured? How manfully did he oppoſe the Jewiſh rulers, and with what an eye of contempt did he look down on their ſevereſt menaces and rebukes? In what plain and direct terms, did he tell them, that God was to be obeyed rather than men; and that he was determined, let the conſequence prove ever ſo fatal, to declare to all the world thoſe important doctrines, which his maſter had advanced, and the many miracles which he had wrought not long before his deceaſe? How indefatigable was he in encouraging his brethren, by his own example, and keeping them if poſſible, from being diſheartened or terrified at the thoughts of any impending perſecutions? When, in proceſs of time, he was firſt ſcourged, and afterwards confined within a dark and loathſome dungeon, how did he rejoice, that he was counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for the name of Jeſus; that Jeſus, whom he had before ſo impiouſly denied? In a word, with what intrepidity did he at laſt glorify his abjured Redeemer, by ſuffering much the ſame tortures, as his crucified maſter? This

eſtabliſhed,

eſtabliſhed, this unſhaken conſtancy was a glorious compenſation for his former miſcarriage. This demonſtrated what a righteous and upright man he was, when he had recollected his ſcattered ſenſes, and had God's grace for his conſolation and ſupport. As his fall and infirmities, on the one hand, plainly ſhewed what a poor, frail, helpleſs creature he was become when he vainly relied on his own ſtrength, and gave way to his tumultuous paſſions; this ſincere, this godly ſorrow for his paſt offences, on the other hand, at laſt reſtored him to the favour and protection of his injured Lord, and eſtabliſhed his character as a Saint for ever.

The almighty has no where aſſured the juſt and upright man, that he ſhall be able at all times to withſtand the temptations into which he may poſſibly be led; but thinks it encouragement ſufficient for him, that when, through the infirmity and frailties of his corrupt nature, he may be over-powered or ſeduced to the commiſſion of any enormous ſin, his grace ſhall never be wanting to ſupport and raiſe him up, after his fall, by a hearty and ſincere repentance. Thus our bleſſed Lord acquaints St. Peter, that he had prayed for him, that his faith might not fail; that he might not abſolutely and finally fall away. Though his faith failed him for an hour or two, that being the utmoſt diſtance of time between his fall and his recovery; though it was for a while damped and interrupted by the caſual abſence of his reaſon; yet the flame of his zeal for God, and his moſt holy religion was not wholly loſt and extinguiſhed. Though his diſtemper, indeed, was mortal in its own nature; yet it received a compleat and ſudden cure, through the art and timely aſſiſtance of his ſpiritual phyſician. Our bleſſed Lord, therefore, did not teach us to pray, that we might be hindered from the commiſſion of any ſin; but that in caſe we ſhould fall into temptation, we ſhould be enabled to overcome it. And this, indeed, was as much for the advantage of the patient, and the honour of his ſpiritual phyſician, as if he had been entirely preſerv-

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ed in perfect health. For the more dangerous the malady was, the more conſpicuous was the virtue and power of the ſovereign remedy. The grace of God is never ſo glorioufly triumphant as when it revives any miſerable and wretched delinquent from the death of ſin to the life of righteouſneſs.

It muſt be confeſſed, however, that the more preſumptuous and perverſe ſinners may have been, the more difficult it will be for them to be ſincerely ſorry for offences; and the juſter grounds will they have to fear, that the almighty will abandon and forſake them, and give them up to a reprobate ſenſe. In ſome caſes, God almighty is ſo far incenſed againſt hardened and obdurate offenders, as not to afford them that grace which is requiſite to be obtained, in order to a hearty repentance; whereas he ſhews himſelf more tender and indulgent, more inclinable to forgive, and be reconciled to ſuch, as have either ignorance or infirmity to plead in mitigation of their crimes. The pſalmiſt, therefore, very diſcreetly, as well as devoutly, prays the almighty to keep him from preſumptuous ſins, leſt they ſhould get dominion over him. Theſe he calls emphatically the great offence, that is, ſuch as are moſt odious in the ſight of God, and of ſuch a heinous nature, that he will not eaſily be reconciled to thoſe who indulge themſelves in the commiſſion of them. And if our illuſtrious penitent imagined ſuch a contrite heart, and ſuch a flood of tears was abſolutely requiſite to waſh away only a ſin of infirmity, committed in a hurry and confuſion of thought, what meaſure muſt needs be neceſſary, where the will acts more voluntarily, and the choice of evil is the reſult of downright perverſeneſs?

To conclude. The ſinner ought to aſcribe, as St. Peter did, the very propenſity and inclination to repent, to the grace and favour of the almighty. When, therefore, we feel within us any good inclinations, any real deſires to amend our lives, and become new creatures, and forſake our former vicious courſes, let us take care

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to make humility the baſis and foundation of our repentance. Let us not imagine, that we are ſufficient of ourſelves to bring about effectually ſo important a work; but let us, with an humble, lowly, and contrite heart, acknowledge, that it is God alone who worketh in us, both to will, and to do of his good pleaſure; and that it is a duty incumbent upon us to make it our principal concern, that ſuch grace as is beſtowed upon us ſhould not be in vain.

By this affecting example of St. Peter, we are inſtructed to be as expeditious in our return from ſin to righteouſneſs, as poſſibly we can. Our Apoſtle no ſooner recollected the words of Jeſus, but he immediately withdrew from the ſcene of his iniquity to a proper place, where he might vent his tears, and exerciſe his devotions without interruption. And the ſame meaſures we ſhould purſue, if we are ambitious of approving ourſelves ſincere penitents. We muſt ſtrike in with the firſt dictates of our conſciences that accuſe us. We muſt not ſeek out frivolous excuſes for poſtponing our reformation. We muſt improve every motion of grace, and abandon every occaſion of ſin; for if we cheriſh and take a delight in our offences, it is much the ſame thing, in reality, as if we acted them over again; for he that quits his vices with reluctance wants nothing more than a favourable opportunity of repeating them.

Again, the bitter tears, which our Apoſtle ſhed on the deſertion of his maſter, teaches us, that a ſincere and godly ſorrow for our ſins is one of the moſt effectual branches of repentance. And this contrition is highly requiſite; becauſe it is not in our power to make any atonement for our ſins to that God whom we have offended, and therefore the only compenſaiton we can make is, to be unfeignedly ſorry for our indecent and unworthy deportment towards him: a broken and contrite heart, the pſalmiſt aſſures us, God will not deſpiſe.

We ſhall only mention one article more, wherein we ought to imitate this grand exemplar, which as it is the laſt, ſo it is the moſt eſſential, ſince all the reſt would be of no importance without

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it; and that is, we ſhould make as thorough a reformation in our manners, as he did, and ſteadfaſtly perſevere in holineſs for the time to come. Let us then devote ourſelves for the future with as much zeal for the glory of God, and the ſervice of our moſt holy religion, as we devoted ourſelves in time paſt to the gratification of our unruly appetites and inordinate affections.

Having followed our illuſtrious penitent thus far, let us attend the final glorious manifeſtation of his humility and fortitude. When ſolicited by the chriſtians at Rome to make his eſcape, and to reſerve himſelf for the further ſervice and comfort of the church, he bravely reſolved not to ſhrink from any ſufferings in the cauſe of his beloved Lord; whereupon he chearfully delivered himſelf up to death:—he declined not the torture, but readily ſubmitted to be crucified: only he begged of the officers, that he might not undergo that death the ordinary way, but might ſuffer with his head downward, affirming that he was unworthy even to ſuffer in the ſame manner as his Lord had ſuffered before him.—His body lays buried, ſays St. Jerom, in the Vatican, near the triumphal way.—There is no need of adding with him, that St. Peter is held in exceſſive veneration throughout the Roman dominions.

Brethren,—in teſtimony of our own humility and contrition

LET US PRAY.

"O Almighty God, our Creator, our Redeemer, how can we "ever be ſufficiently humble!—When we conſider that we once "were not; when we conſider that even thou with all thy omni-"potence canſt not reduce us to a lower degree of non-exiſtence "than that from whence we were called forth! when we conſider "that we ſtill ſo depend upon thee, that we cannot ſubſiſt one mo-"ment without thee! What a vanity, what a ſhadow, what a nothing "then are we, who once were not, and now only are becauſe thou "art; and can no longer ſtand in being than ſupported by the arm "of thy power!

"O gracious

" O gracious God! We know not whether we ought more to " adore and magnify, either that power that could raiſe us from " duſt and aſhes to be what we are, or that goodneſs which could " determine that power to ſo wonderful a production. Praiſe and " adoration be to thee, O almighty and gracious God! for it was " from thy power and goodneſs that we received our Being. Let " every one of us then—ſinful mortals as we are,—approach thee " in the language of thy accepted penitent.—Thou art he that took " me out of my mother's womb, and thou alſo waſt my hope when " I hanged yet upon my mother's breaſt. I have been alſo left unto " thee ever ſince I was born: thou art my God even from my mo- " ther's womb. My ſoul ſtill hangeth upon thee: thy right hand " does uphold me. Thou holdeſt my ſoul in life, and ſuffereſt not " my feet to ſlip.

" To thee then, O father of ſpirits, we give up and devote our- " ſelves, for we are entirely from thee, entirely by thee, and there- " fore entirely thine. Free us therefore, O benignant Lord of " heaven and earth, free us from our paſſions, deliver us from our " manifold ſins, wipe out our tranſgreſſions, and receive us who are " truly penitent according to thy moſt gracious promiſes, into thy " preſence and thy kingdom, there to dwell with thy holy Pro- " phets, Evangeliſts, and Apoſtles in life eternal, through the " merits and for the ſake of thy dearly beloved ſon our only Lord " and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Amen."

SERMON VI.

For the SUNDAY before EASTER.

Meditations on the Sufferings of Jeſus Chriſt.

REVELATION VII. 14.

THESE ARE THEY WHICH CAME OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION, AND HAVE WASHED THEIR ROBES, AND MADE THEM WHITE IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.

THAT there is a power above us, one ſupreme, one infinitely wiſe, one almighty, juſt, and good Being, who at firſt created the world, and all things contained therein; is a truth ſo evident, and ſo loudly proclaimed by the voice of univerſal nature, that it never was controverted even by thoſe who had no other light than that of their reaſon to guide and direct them. But that this ſupreme Being, this father of lights, this creator of the univerſe ſhould carry his compaſſion and regard for us men to ſuch an immenſe height of tenderneſs as to ſend his dearly beloved, his only begotten ſon into the world to lay down his life a ranſom

for us, is ſuch a myſtery of godlineſs, ſuch an inſtance of boundleſs, ineffable, and tranſcendent grace and love, as never before was blazoned to ears of fleſh and blood. That light itſelf ſhould be darkned!—That love ſhould be rejected!—That innocence ſhould be accuſed!—That juſtice ſhould be arraigned!—Nay ſhould ſuffer a moſt ignominious and painful death for our ſakes!—Who can reflect on theſe accumulated circumſtances without the ſtrongeſt emotion and amazement?—Who can ſpeak of them but in terms of tranſport and exultation? And yet how aſtoniſhing ſoever it may appear to be, it is an indiſputable fact,—becauſe the ſpirit of God himſelf has thought fit to reveal this myſterious and important truth to us in the ſacred ſcriptures. And happy! thrice happy was it for us that he who was lifted up in the ſame manner as the ſerpent was in the wilderneſs, ſhould be truly God, and truly man: for had it been otherwiſe, the whole race of mankind had been inevitably loſt and undone for ever: as on the one hand, he could not have ſuffered at all for us, if he had not aſſumed our nature, ſo on the other, he could not have been our Saviour and Redeemer had he not been as truly God. All the virtue of his agony and bloody ſweat, of his croſs and paſſion, of his precious death and burial, wholly depending on the infinite value, the high dignity and worth of the perſon who underwent them: who partaking of the godhead as well as the manhood, notwithſtanding he ſuffered only in the latter, yet the one being at the ſame time united to the other in the ſame individual perſon, his ſufferings muſt of neceſſity prove of infinite regard and merit, and who for that very reaſon is ſaid in ſundry places in ſcripture, to have purchaſed his church with his own blood.

This indeed is the only ſolid baſis of our future hopes; for our bleſſed Redeemer being perfect God, and perfect man, did, by his own oblation, of himſelf once offered, make a full, perfect and ſufficient ſacrifice, oblation and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world; by virtue whereof, there are none of us, here aſſembled together

together with hearts flaming with gratitude and burning with zeal to commemorate theſe ſolemn days of mourning and humiliation, if we are not wanting to ourſelves, but may obtain, through the merits and mediation of his ſufferings a full and free remiſſion of all our ſins. There are none of us but may be among that great multitude recorded in the verſes preceding our text, "which no man "could number, of all nations and kindreds of people and tongues "which ſtood before the throne, and before the lamb, clothed with "white robes and palms in their hands." And theſe are declared to be—"They which came out of great tribulation, and have "waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the "lamb." Moreover, the bleſſings which this precious blood-ſhedding have procured for us, are deſcribed in this Revelation of the beloved Diſciple St. John, with great energy and ſpirit. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and ſerve him day "and night in his temple: and he that ſitteth on the throne ſhall "dwell among them. They ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt "any more, neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat. "For the lamb which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed "them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and "God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Such and ſo great bleſſings being procured for us by the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, ſhed for our redemption, what further need will there be for arguments to demonſtrate the reaſonableneſs of a ſolemn, annual obſervance of one holy week for the purpoſes of mourning and humiliation: for devoutly turning our thoughts on the dignity of the perſon, and the amiable qualifications of him who did humble himſelf even to the death upon the croſs, for us miſerable ſinners; who lay in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death, that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlaſting life.

And in order hereunto, we have no manner of occaſion to give you an occular repreſentation of our bleſſed Saviour's death and paſſion;

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to produce before you a picture of the bleeding God; as if we were to act by ſight only, and not by faith. But rather let us look down with contempt on ſuch mean and abject artifices, for the incitement of our devotions: and have recourſe to the writings of the holy Evangeliſts, where we ſhall find the melancholy ſtory diſplayed in far brighter colours than can poſſibly be expreſſed by the moſt inimitable pencil. And in order to warm our affections and engage our attention the more cloſely, give me leave to promiſe, that he who thus ſuffered, was perfectly innocent: that nothing in nature was ſo free from ſpot or blemiſh. That he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. That his very human nature, was of divine extraction. That though he was a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief, yet was he the eternal ſon of God likewiſe. That he was infinitely good and gracious, for he went about doing good; it was the whole buſineſs and pleaſure of his life, his natural refreſhment as it were, to do the will of his father, and to finiſh his work. That all his grief and ſorrow, all the ignominious treatment he met with was on our account, and not his own. That he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our iniquities; that the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, that by his ſtripes we might be healed.

Let not an unaccountable partiality, or rather a deluſive blindneſs hinder us, my brethren, from caſting our eyes inwards and impartially reflecting in our minds on the ſins which we are conſcious to ourſelves we have committed; but let us with deep and unfeigned contrition view our miſdoings like true, like chriſtian penitents. Then ſhall we with united voice exclaim; theſe! theſe iniquities of ours! brought our bleſſed Redeemer with pain and ſorrow to his grave! Let us recollect that theſe like offences were what expoſed the ſon of God to the very rancour of bitter malice: to every act of deſpiteſulneſs which wicked, and blood thirſty men could poſſibly expreſs againſt him: theſe were

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they which occaſioned the almighty creator of heaven and earth, to be treated with the utmoſt ignominy and contempt; his ſacred name to be blaſphemed; and his invaluable perſon to be contemned and deſpiſed by the work of his own hands. Theſe, in a word, were they, which made his whole life one continued ſcene of forbearance and ſelf denial. But not to dwell too long on thoſe numberleſs afflictions which he groaned under long before his crucifixion, let us, by an eye of faith, attend our bleſſed Lord only from the garden to the croſs: and then put a ſolemn queſtion. Have we not juſt grounds to teſtify all the ſigns of the moſt unfeigned ſorrow and contrition? To mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only ſon; and to be in bitterneſs for him as one that is in bitterneſs for his firſt born?

Imagine yourſelves now within ſight of your bleſſed Saviour in the garden of Gethſemane upon the near approach of his crucifixion. Behold! with ſtreaming eyes, the fatal effects of man's credulity and weakneſs! See into what a deploreable ſtate and condition they have reduced the only begotten ſon of the everliving God! With what a weight do they preſs upon him! How his whole ſoul is melted down with grief and anguiſh on their account! Liſt! oh, liſt! What are the words that flow from his trembling lips? Heart-rending ſounds!—"My ſoul, ſaith he, is exceeding "ſorrowful even unto death!"—Shall then our dear Redeemer thus ſink under the load of man's tranſgreſſions, thoſe ſins, in which we, ungrateful as we are, take pleaſure and delight: and ſhall we refuſe to bear our part?—Shall we not rather ſympathize with him?—Shall we expreſs no feeling,—no remorſe either for his ſufferings, or for thoſe deviations from uprightneſs which brought down theſe calamities upon him? If it be not abſolutely impoſſible, it is at leaſt moſt abſurd, moſt unreaſonable that we ſhould ſtand unconcerned at the melancholy proſpect.

But let us take a ſtep or two further into the garden, and there we ſhall behold!—Heaven and earth! What an amazing apparition! The Lord of life and glory; the majeſty of the univerſe; the only begotten ſon of the father; lying proſtrate on the ground. What could be the cauſe that ſhould throw ſo powerful a prince into ſo debaſing a poſture, and give him ſuch anxiety of mind? The cauſe, alas! is too plain. He ſees! he views! a cup in his incenſed father's hand full of the moſt bitter poiſon. A deadly compound pregnant with the ſins of the whole race of man. —This fatal cup he ſees reached out to him!—Upon the ſight of ſo much wrath and burning indignation which was due to a miſerable world for their united tranſgreſſions, the human nature, as if it had been perfectly deſerted, began to ſhudder;—to ſtart back with horror at the bitter, the dreadful, the envenomed potion. It is the diſmal proſpect of this cup, that throws him into ſuch convulſions; that extorts ſuch a flood of tears from his eyes, and induces him to apply himſelf in the moſt pathetic terms, to that injured juſtice, that offended Deity, who was able to ſave him from that death his human nature ſo much dreaded. "O my "father,—ſays he,—if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me."—As if he had ſaid: If thou haſt not irrevocably doomed that painful death which I am about to ſuffer, if the dreadful morrow may paſs from me, if it be poſſible, if there can be any other way found out for the redemption of loſt mankind but this, ſhew ſome pity on your choſen victim, thus overwhelmed with grief and ſorrow; and let this cup paſs from me. However, the words were no ſooner uttered, than the godhead recovers itſelf, as it were, and exerts its power; whereupon the manhood immediately teſtifies its intire acquieſcence and reſignation. NEVERTHELESS NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE.

And now his ſoul was made a ſacrifice and oblation for ſin indeed. For no ſooner had he drank the bitter draught, but—behold!

hold! Ye faithful! What an agony he is in! See how his veins ſwell! How his blood boils within him and forces a paſſage through every pore!—"And there appeared an angel unto him from hea-"ven, ſtrengthning him." Ah, bleſſed Lord! Was ever ſorrow like unto your ſorrow? Was it ever poſſible for the human nature to have gone through ſuch a long ſeries of uncommon afflictions had not the almighty power of that divine eſſence to which it was united, upheld and ſupported it? With what ſhame and confuſion of face muſt we be covered, if we will but reflect how ſeverely the eternal ſon of the ever living God ſuffered for our ſakes; not for his own, but our tranſgreſſions. With what a broken and contrite ſpirit ought we to approach the throne of grace! How ought we to loath and deteſt ourſelves, and repent in duſt and aſhes! In one word,—do you not think it a duty highly incumbent on us, to weep for him, or rather for ourſelves with a ſore and bitter lamentation.

But alas! This was not the only trial he was to undergo.—This ſore amazement, this heavineſs, this bloody ſweat of our Redeemer's was attended with a new and ſurpriſing ſcene of ſorrow. No ſooner was he raiſed from the ground, and ſomewhat recovered from his pains, but he was apprehended as a thief by a clamorous rabble: with all the teſtimonies of inſolence and contempt was the bleſſed Jeſus halled before the high prieſt, and a convocation of ſcribes and elders. At all adventures was the innocent and immaculate ſon of God pronounced guilty of the falſe charge that was laid againſt him; then, as a condemned criminal, was he ſpit upon! The holy Jeſus was buffeted! They ſmote him with the palms of their hands; —in deriſion they cried out to him,—"Propheſie, thou Chriſt who "is he that ſmote thee?"

The next day he was led away bound to Pilate, there to undergo freſh indignities. A malefactor, a rioter, a murderer, was preferred before the Saviour of the world. In an inſulting manner, they cloathed him in ſcarlet, the tattered robes of royalty. A crown was

placed on his ſacred head. But what a crown! A crown of thorns encircled his bleeding temples: and that hand that well could hurl the burſting thunder's bolt, or forked lightning's blaſt, was ſceptred with a reed: and pigmy mortals preſumed to pay the homage of deriſion to the king of kings! As thoſe execrable wretches went with him to the place of execution, in order to aggravate his ſufferings, they tendered him a nauſeous potion of vinegar mixed with gall to drink.—At laſt, his croſs being fixed in the ground, they raiſed his ſacred body upon it, and extending his hands and feet, they drove ſharp nails quite through them into the wood. And when he was ſuſpended in that painful poſture, they turned their impious eyes upon him; and gazed with licentious exultation on the bleeding king of heaven and earth. Nor even then did they ceaſe to expreſs their further deriſion and contempt; theſe miſcreants interrupted his private devotions, his laſt groans with their inſulting clamours. And thus the Lord of Life, the only begotten ſon of God was covered with confuſion: for ſurely never was ſo much ſpotleſs innocence ſo ſhamefully traduced; never was ſuch amazing goodneſs ſo vilely abuſed; never was ſuch majeſtick greatneſs ſo openly, ſo groſsly inſulted by the moſt ungrateful and rebellious ſubjects. Ah, brethren! while we are meditating on their crimes let us not lay that flattering unction to our ſouls, that we are guiltleſs. Rather let us once more turn the eye of faith, and view the bleeding Deity afreſh.—Behold, our bleſſed Saviour thus hanging on the croſs, and undergoing this ſhameful lingering and painful death for our ſakes! Let us attend him with repentant tears in his laſt moments. How faſt does his precious blood guſh out of thoſe orifices which the nails have made! How does the pain, firſt raiſed in his hands and feet, diffuſe itſelf in an inſtant over all his body! See what livid fire darts from the orbits of his eyes! How his heart pants, and every joint is ſtretched on the rack! How his very ſoul ſeems tortured with the reflection of God's high diſpleaſure.

ſure. Behold! Behold the ſon of God all in a flame offering himſelf up an expiatory ſacrifice for the ſins of the whole world! Hear him! Hear him in the anguiſh of his ſoul crying out—"ELOI, "ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI—my God, my God, why haſt "thou forſaken me?"—What tongue is capable of expreſſing that pain, that grief, that horror and confuſion which agitated our bleſſed Saviour when he uttered that doleful exclamation? It was doubtleſs a demonſtrative evidence that his human nature was incapable of enduring it much longer. IT IS FINISHED, ſaid the divine matyr, and then commended his ſpirit into his father's hand, and gave up the ghoſt.

Here let us pauſe!—Here let us ſeek for thoſe leſſons of inſtruction which theſe ſcenes, we have been calling to your imagination, ought to ſuggeſt. For certain it is, unleſs we are made better men, and ſincerer chriſtians, all this painting is but empty words.—Nay worſe, an idle ſporting with awful facts. But I truſt we have not ſo learned Jeſus Chriſt. If then God almighty thus graciouſly condeſcended to deliver up his dearly beloved, his only begotten ſon, for a ſinful and rebellious world; if God was made man, that loſt and undone man might be reſcued from the power of Satan; if our bleſſed Redeemer was ſo tender of our ſouls, as not only to take upon him the form of a ſervant, but to ſhed his precious blood for us, and to endure the pain, as well as the ſhame and ſcandal of the croſs; how unreaſonable, how indecent, how undutiful would it appear in us to be reſtleſs and impatient, to murmur and complain, whenever by the good providence of God we are called to ſuffer! How diſtant is the proportion upon the compariſon betwixt his ſufferings and the ſharpeſt afflictions that mere human nature is capable of ſuſtaining! What are we, poor ſinful duſt and aſhes, when ſet in competition with him! He was not only the beſt of men, and poſſeſt of every grace and virtue that is truly amiable and praiſe worthy, but the eternal ſon of God, one in nature with him: and

yet this gracious, this great, this powerful God, vouchſafed to be diveſted of all his glory; to become man; to ſubmit to injuries, poverty and reproach; to die a cruel and painful death, and to be made a curſe for us, that he might redeem us from the curſe of the law. Let us then, being freed from this great tribulation, waſh our robes and make them white in the blood of the lamb.

Such, and ſo great and good, ſo ſpotleſs and innocent was he who met with ſuch deſpiteful treatment, ſuch implacable malice and hatred, ſuch violent oppoſition from a ſinful world, and ſuch, and ſo painful, and inexpreſſibly grievous were the ſufferings which he patiently endured, and the affronts and indignities which he ſuſtained, without the leaſt repining or complaint. Like the ſheep before the ſhearers, he was dumb, and opened not his mouth.

Now, who and what are we? What ſpecious grounds can we poſſibly have for the juſtification of our murmuring and impatience? Is any one of us in the loweſt circumſtances that can be imagined? Are we in want not only of the conveniences but the very neceſſaries of life?—Let us reflect that the eternal ſon of God, the great creator of heaven and earth was laid in a manger, and lived contented even in an abject ſtate.—Has any one of us been injured in his character, been treated with poignant language, or unjuſtly overwhelmed with infamy and reproach? Let ſuch a one reflect that his ever bleſſed Saviour, notwithſtanding his unſpotted innocence; notwithſtanding there was no deceit in his mouth; yet was he the ſtanding mark of brutal calumny, a ſcorn and a deriſion to them that were round about him. Thus was the benevolent Jeſus deſpiſed and rejected of men. Thus was grace and goodneſs itſelf ſtigmatized with a thouſand opprobrious appellations.

Is not the richeſt mortal breathing, the man of the moſt noble extraction and poſſeſſed of all the perfections that human nature can boaſt of, the offspring of corruption, and of kin to the vileſt reptiles upon earth? Are not all of us ſinful duſt and aſhes, vaſſals and ſubjects

jects of God, as it is in and through him that we live, move, and have our being; the ſole right of his ſon, as he purchaſed our redemption with the invaluable price of his precious blood; and the diſciples and ſervants of our Lord and maſter, as we take upon us his holy name, and make public profeſſion of his moſt holy religion: and yet at the ſame time, would it, think you, be unjuſt to add that we are daring and audacious ſinners? Do we not in ſome inſtance or other openly and daily bid defiance to his holy laws?—"Wherefore "then doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of "his ſins."

Let us, my chriſtian brethren, in concluſion, revive our drooping ſouls by a ſerious meditation on the happy and glorious conſequences of our bleſſed Saviour's death and ſufferings. A meditation that will ſilence all our complaints, calm all our paſſions, and prove a certain remedy, if righty applied, to heal the deepeſt wounds that we can poſſibly receive from the ſevereſt calamities that can attend us whilſt here on earth; for if we will but lead holy and godly lives; if we will but fulfil the great commandment of our gracious Lord, and approve ourſelves his diſciples by repeated diſplays of love and tenderneſs towards each other, "The lamb which is in the midſt "of the throne ſhall feed us and ſhall lead us unto living fountains "of waters: and God ſhall wipe away all tears from our eyes."

SERMON

SERMON V.

For GOOD-FRIDAY.

The Holy Exemplar.

1. PETER II. 21, 22.

CHRIST SUFFERED FOR US, LEAVING US AN EXAMPLE, THAT YE SHOULD FOLLOW HIS STEPS: WHO DID NO SIN, NEITHER WAS GUILE FOUND IN HIS MOUTH.

A Good man ſtruggling with misfortunes, is a ſight, ſays a Heathen writer, on which the immortal Gods might look with pleaſure. But a perfectly innocent man riſing ſuperior to the moſt injurious treatment, muſt aggrandize the ſcene. Such was our bleſſed Lord, taking his very enemies for witneſſes: The judge himſelf, though prevailed on to deliver him up a victim to a turbulent faction, openly declared he could find no fault with him; and thoſe who were ſo eager to gratify their malice and reſentment, upon ſuch an extraordinary teſtimony of his innocence, could only turn a deaf ear, and endeavour to ſtifle remorſe by their repeated outcries for his crucifixion.

It may be deemed a very improbable circumſtance that a learned and reſpectable ſociety ſhould purſue the life of one ſo perfectly innocent

nocent with ſuch unremitting malice, that neither his blameleſs behaviour, nor his moſt ſurpriſing miracles, nor his heavenly doctrines, could ſoften their relentleſs natures or conciliate their affections.—Thoſe who are apt to think human nature not altogether ſo depraved as ſome men would believe and repreſent it to be, may demand a reaſon for this implacable fury; ſince, to their conception it appears an abſolute abſurdity, to ſuppoſe a numerous body of men unanimous in ſo ungenerous a conſpiracy, as to contrive the public execution of one, whom ſome imagined to be the ſon of God, and others a great Prophet. It may not therefore be altogether improper in this place to examine a little into the foundation of this implacable hatred and contempt.

There is nothing that worldly minded men lay ſo much to heart, as the diſappointment of their ambitious views. The Jewiſh people were confeſſedly in great expectation, about the time of our Saviour's birth, of the appearance of the Meſſiah, whom they vainly imagined would be a powerful prince, who ſhould deliver them from the yoke of Roman bondage, make them the envy of all nations, and a terror to their neighbours; who ſhould enable the high prieſt, the ſcribes and phariſees, to give laws to a conquered world. In ſhort, all their ideas of the promiſed Meſſiah were ſuitable to the aſpirations of men who thirſted after power, and whoſe hearts were fixed alone on worldly glory. No wonder then, that they ſhould be ſo unwilling to believe our Saviour to be the prophet they expected, the Redeemer that they looked for! No wonder they ſhould ſet themſelves to oppoſe one, who ſo openly reproved their haughty behaviour, one who commanded his diſciples to deteſt their hypocriſy and to look down with contempt upon their public formalities. "The ſcribes and phariſees,—ſays our bleſſed Lord,—ſit in "Moſes' ſeat. All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that "obſerve and do; but do not ye after their works: for they ſay and "do not. For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be born,

"and

" and lay them on men's ſhoulders but they themſelves will not " move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they " do for to be ſeen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and " enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermoſt " rooms at feaſts, and the chief ſeats in the ſynagogues, and greet- " ings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. " But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your maſter, even Chriſt, " and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon " earth: for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be ye " called maſters: for one is your maſter, even Chriſt. But he that " is greateſt among you, ſhall be your ſervant. And whoſoever " ſhall exalt himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that ſhall humble " himſelf ſhall be exalted." But woe unto you, ſcribes and phariſees, &c. It was a mortifying ſentence to theſe execrable ſcribes and phariſees, who doated on the temple even to adoration, to hear that not one ſtone ſhould be left upon another, but that the whole ſhould be totally ruined and deſtroyed. They could not bear, that their doctrines ſhould be expoſed to contempt, which furniſhed them with plauſible pretences for making a prey on the people. As they took delight in devouring widows houſes, and plundering the orphan and the helpleſs, benevolence and charity were doctrines they could not eaſily digeſt. They could not think of parting with their earthly riches in poſſeſſion, even for heavenly manſions in reverſion. They were highly offended, therefore, at doctrines ſo oppoſite to their own proceedings, and of conſequence uſed their utmoſt endeavours to ſilence the promoter of them, and to revenge ſuch ſtabbing provocations, by imbruing their hands in the blood of the deteſted author; thus blinded by rage and diſappointment, they purſued the Lord of life to the place of execution; where " he " was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, bruiſed for our iniquities: " the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes " we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone aſtray: we have

" turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him " the iniquity of us all. He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, " yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the " ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he " openeth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and from " judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? For he was " cut off out of the land of the living; for the tranſgreſſion of my " people was he ſtricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, " and with the rich in his death, becauſe he had done no violence, " neither was any deceit in his mouth."—Thus—and ſo explicit are the words of the prophet Iſaiah.

We this day commemorate theſe ſufferings of the ſon of God. A moſt awful and ſolemn occaſion! Our meditations therefore ought to be in ſome degree ſuitable to the dignity of that great and glorious Being who " ſuffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye " ſhould follow his ſteps: who did no ſin neither was guile found " in his mouth." Every ſerious inquirer may, moſt aſſuredly, from our holy exemplar, form a perfect pattern for his imitation; we ſhall therefore attempt an outline of the hiſtory of this divine perſonage in order to introduce ſome uſeful contemplations on his character and the manifold obligations we lie under to this our great benefactor. To anſwer this purpoſe we ſhall, as near as poſſible, keep to the very words of thoſe ſacred hiſtorians the Evangeliſts.

In the days of Herod, the king of Judea, the angel Gabriel was ſent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin, eſpouſed to a man whoſe name was Joſeph, of the houſe of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and ſaid, Behold thou ſhalt conceive, and bring forth a ſon, and ſhalt call his name Jeſus. He ſhall be great, and ſhall be called the ſon of the higheſt, and the Lord God ſhall give unto him the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there ſhall be no end. According to the prediction of the angel, before ſhe knew

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man, ſhe brought forth her firſt-born. And being at that time at Bethlehem, a city of Judea, whither ſhe went with her eſpouſed huſband Joſeph to be taxed, ſhe laid the new-born babe in a manger, becauſe there was no room for them in the inn. But notwithſtanding this his poor and humble appearance, a ſtar was diſcovered in the eaſt, and there came wiſe men to Jeruſalem, to enquire for the child, who was born king of the Jews. Herod being made privy to their errand, they are ſent by him to enquire for the child, he craftily aſſuring them, that he himſelf meant to worſhip him. When they left Jeruſalem, the ſtar led them where the young child lay; and when they had paid their adoration to him, they preſented him with gold, frankincenſe, and myrrh. After this, being warned of God by a dream, they departed to their own country, without returning to Herod. Nor was this the only miracle that attended this important birth; for while certain ſhepherds were feeding their flocks, they ſaw a glorious viſion of angels, who revealed to them, that the Saviour of the world was born that day, and directed them by ſure tokens where to find him.

Now Herod the king, being greatly enraged, when he found that he was mocked of the wiſe men, and fearing leſt the growing greatneſs of the infant-king ſhould endanger his throne, with unheard of cruelty gave orders, that all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coaſts thereof, from two years old and under, ſhould be ſlain; hoping that, in ſo general a maſſacre, it would be impoſſible for the child, whoſe life he ſought, to eſcape: and this order he cauſed to be executed ſo ſtrictly, that it is ſaid, he ſpared not even his own ſon. But the reputed father of Jeſus, being warned of God in a dream, eſcaped with the young child, and his mother by night, and fled into Egypt, where he remained, till the death of Herod; after which, he ſettled in a city called Nazareth, where the holy infant lived ſome time, remarkable for the virtues proper to his age, his modeſty, humility, and filial love,

all which he exerciſed to ſo high a degree, that his kindred and acquaintance were enamoured of his conduct.

At twelve years of age, we find the bleſſed Jeſus diſputing with the moſt learned doctors in the temple at Jeruſalem, hearing and aſking them queſtions; who were greatly aſtoniſhed at his wiſdom, which ſo far ſurpaſſed his age. However, as the time was not yet come for him to make his public appearance, he returned home with Joſeph and his mother, and gave a perfect pattern to the world of filial duty.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæſar, the word of God came unto John, the ſon of Zaccharias, in the wilderneſs; and he went into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptiſm of repentance, for the remiſſion of ſins, and declaring himſelf the forerunner of Chriſt. Unto him great multitudes reſorted, and were baptiſed. And Jeſus himſelf condeſcended to be baptiſed of him: and, as he was praying, the heaven was opened, and the holy ghoſt deſcended in a bodily ſhape like a dove upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which ſaid; "This is my beloved ſon, in "whom I am well pleaſed." After which, being full of the holy ghoſt he was led by the ſpirit into the wilderneſs, where he was tempted of the devil forty days, during which time he did eat nothing. But when he had undergone this ſevere trial of his virtue, and came off a glorious conqueror, angels miniſtered unto him.

And now the bleſſed Jeſus, being near thirty years of age, began to ſhew himſelf to the world, and to declare himſelf to be the ſon of God, and that he was ſent to redeem mankind from ſin and deſtruction. He choſe twelve apoſtles, who, though men poor and illiterate, afterwards became the wonders of the age for their unſhaken conſtancy and powerful elocution, bearing teſtimony of their maſter even to death. Our bleſſed Lord, in order to convince his diſciples and followers of his divinity, publiſhed his doctrines in many heavenly and powerful ſermons, particularly that on

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the Mount; and to convince them more fully of his divine miſſion, he wrought divers miracles, ſurpaſſing all that were ever performed by Moſes himſelf, and beyond any power but that of God to accompliſh. For inſtance, by his word alone he cured the moſt ſtubborn and inveterate diſeaſes, and reſtored thoſe who were poſſeſſed with devils. He made the dumb to ſpeak, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the blind to ſee. He fed, in a moſt miraculous manner, ſeveral thouſands in the wilderneſs. He reſtored Jairus's daughter to life; and raiſed Lazarus from the dead, after he had been buried four days. He went about doing good, and healed all ſuch as were afflicted either in body or mind, that made their application to him. And as if miracles were not a ſufficient ſeal to his authority, he added that of prophecy. He foretold the deſtruction of the temple, and the deſolation that afterwards befel the Jews; his own ſufferings, death, and reſurrection, and the ſufferings of the apoſtles: all which duly conſidered, it is no marvel, notwithſtanding the malice and envy of the chief prieſts, the ſcribes and phariſees, if the more ſober part of the people eſteemed him the prophet ſent from God, the holy one of Iſrael.

A life ſo uſeful, ſo blameleſs, ſo miraculous, one would think muſt inevitably gain the love and applauſe of all mankind: but, in order to make room in men's hearts for a more heavenly religion, the ſon of God was moved to uncover the hypocriſy of the chief prieſts, the ſcribes and phariſees, and wean his diſciples from their attachment to the traditions of men. This ſtirred up the envy of thoſe powerful ſectarians, to ſuch a degree that nothing but his death could gratify their rage and reſentment. They little thought they were putting the finiſhing ſtroke to man's redemption, and, by this one ſacrifice, freeing the world from that intolerable burthen, the ceremonial law.

The bleſſed Jeſus, ſome ſhort time before his death, well knowing every thing that would befal him, takes a pathetic farewel of his

his diſciples, and inſtitutes the manner in which they ſhould commemorate his death and ſufferings, for the time to come. He points out the perſon who was to betray him, and gives him a rebuke infinitely too gentle for the deteſtable crime he was going to commit. After he had thus ſettled every thing for the welfare of mankind; after he had amply enriched them by his doctrine and example; there was nothing left that could be done, but to die for them. And to this the holy Jeſus readily ſubmitted; and, that a perfect ſatisfaction might be made for man's tranſgreſſion, he reſigned his ſpotleſs life in agonizing pain upon a croſs, between two common malefactors.

Surely a tranſaction like this demands a pauſe of contemplation! The great work of redemption was completed as on this day, when the Lord of life was lifted up for ſinful men. Behold our high-prieſt offering up the great ſacrifice required as a propitiation for the ſins of the whole world! Behold, by the eye of faith, this great oblation! and you muſt acknowledge, that though there never was any ſpectacle ſo mournful, yet no one was ever ſo glorious, no one ever ſo worthy of the admiration both of men and angels. Stript he was, indeed, of all the ſupports and accommodations of this life; ſurrounded he was with every thing that to human nature was grievous: and yet, even in this depth of his humiliation, if we conſider the mighty work he was accompliſhing, even while he hung on the croſs, was this great captain of our ſalvation ſubduing our enemies, vanquiſhing death by his death, and diſarming ſin of its ſting, and hell of its terrors; and, in a word, opening for us a door to life and immortality.

Notwithſtanding the enemies of the bleſſed Jeſus were fully revenged, to all outward appearance, for his expoſing their hypocriſy and wicked arts, yet they had not long to triumph: for though, as if they were jealous of his power after death, they had ſet a ſtrong guard to watch his lifeleſs corpſe; yet the third day, early in the

the morning, he aroſe from the dead, and ſhewed himſelf to his diſciples, and converſed freely with them for many days. After which, having firſt made them a promiſe, which was ſoon afterwards performed, of ſending the holy ghoſt to comfort and enlighten them, while they ſtood gazing upon him, a cloud received him out of their ſight.

The lord of life and happineſs is now aſcended to his father, at whoſe right-hand he ſits in glory everlaſting; and when the fulneſs of time ſhall come, he will make another and more glorious appearance, the brightneſs of which will as much aſtoniſh the world, as his humility had done before. In the mean time, he hath left behind him the beſt exemplar, for, as it is moſt truly ſaid in the text, "He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

So amiable, ſo holy, ſo perfect, ſo glorious a character, what mortal can be able to delineate! It is a ſubject that would baffle the ſkill of angels to do it juſtice; yet as it is left for our example, conſcious as we are of our great inability, I conceive we may venture ſo far, as to remind you of ſome few particulars, that may ſerve to create in you an ardent and holy deſire of imitating, as far as mortals can imitate, his heavenly perfections.

As to the perſon of the bleſſed Jeſus, though the ſacred penmen are entirely ſilent in that particular, yet other authors have aſſured us, that it was inexpreſſibly ſweet, beautiful, and majeſtic; there was an uncommon air of greatneſs, and a compoſed ſeriouſneſs of countenance, that denoted a mind intent only on the moſt important and intereſting affairs of mankind. Our bleſſed Saviour, though remarkably chearful, was never ſeen to laugh, but, on the contrary, was often obſerved to melt into tears, as may be gathered from various places in holy writ; but then thoſe tears were ſhed not for his own troubles, but for the hardneſs of heart, and impenitence of mankind.

As to his temper, it was mild, ſweet, and compaſſionate; and yet, upon proper occaſions, he did not fail to ſhew his juſt anger and reſentment: witneſs his ſharp reprehenſions of the ſcribes and phariſees. He embraced all opportunities of ſhewing the utmoſt tenderneſs for the perſons, as well as the ſouls of men: he demonſtrated the greateſt affection for thoſe who were willing to be converted, and was deeply concerned for all obſtinate and obdurate ſinners: his compaſſion was ſo great for the failings of mankind, that, when he was about to ſuffer the agonies of death, he put up this remarkable prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In ſhort, every ſtation of life may find here a perfect pattern for their behaviour; for he was dutiful and ſubmiſſive to his mother, and reputed father; he was humble and affable to his followers; and condeſcended to deliver his doctrines in ſuch parables, as were adapted to the capacities of the meaneſt, as well as the moſt learned of the people. That no pretence might be made hereafter, by any of his adherents, to an exemption from that proper reſpect which is due to rulers and governors, he condeſcended to work a miracle for the payment of that tribute, which was exacted by the reigning power. And on the other hand, leſt an ill-timed puſillanimity ſhould poſſeſs any of his diſciples, he ſhewed them by his behaviour to the ſcribes and phariſees, how, and with what ſeverity, they ought to reprimand the vicious, however countenanced and protected by men in power. That they might deſpiſe all dangers, when a lawful call was made to pluck the viſor from the hypocrite, he let no opportunity ſlip to ſhew his intrepidity upon ſuch occaſions. That worldly pomp and grandeur might not allure, or dazzle the eye of any of his diſciples, he hid himſelf and eſcaped out of the hands of thoſe, who were once determined to make him an earthly king. That poverty might have as little power as poſſible to affright them, he choſe a low and mean way of living, inſomuch that he had not where to lay his head.

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And, that nothing might be wanting to render them complete, he ſet them frequently the example, and gave them the moſt perfect, the moſt comprehenſive form of prayer, that ever was compoſed. Having thus armed them againſt poverty and riches, and directed them how they were to behave towards men, and in what form of words they might addreſs themſelves to God; to complete the grand exemplar, he ſhewed them, that though innocence itſelf might ſuffer, it could never be overcome; that though he was reviled, he reviled not again; and that, notwithſtanding his enemies treated him with the utmoſt cruelty, he made no returns but prayers for their forgiveneſs.

Our Saviour, it is true, upon the near approach of his death, retired, and even prayed, that the cup might paſs from him; but how ſoon does he check the reluctance of the fleſh, by an abſolute ſubmiſſion! Which conduct ſhews, that it is no cowardice to be afraid of ſuffering; that being true courage, which can diſſipate thoſe fears, and ſay, "Not my will, O God, but thine be done." Not to be ſenſible of pain, or affected at diſappointments, is not to be a man: but not to let the evils of the world prevail againſt our virtue and conſtancy, is truly godlike. But to proceed no farther; for it is in vain to think of drawing even a faint copy of infinite perfection: and the moſt that can be ſaid by man is briefly ſummed up in the words of our text; "Chriſt ſuffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye ſhould follow his ſteps: who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

As a proper meditation on the deſign of our Saviour's appearance, and his behaviour while on earth, may furniſh great comfort to every ſerious and well-diſpoſed Chriſtian, we ſhall add a ſhort reflection or two, which it is hoped will be thought ſuitable to our preſent purpoſe.

The ever bleſſed Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners: in his life-time he pronounced forgiveneſs to many grievous offenders:

viſited, converſed, and uſed the moſt powerful arguments, in order to draw them to repentance. He gave mankind repeated aſſurances that even the angels of heaven rejoiced at the converſion of a ſinner, and that he himſelf came into the world on purpoſe to make atonement for them. He aſſures them, in the moſt affectionate terms, of ſalvation and never ending joys in heaven, if they will but do juſtice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God; but at the ſame time peremptorily declares, that if they die in their ſins, they muſt inevitably go to that diſconſolate place, where moping melancholy, agonizing pain, and black deſpair perpetually reſide. This is doubtleſs a proceeding, that even the wicked cannot with juſtice complain of: it is their own wilful and obſtinate choice; and if they thus perſiſt in their impieties, who is too blame, if they are puniſhed for their diſobedience?

In concluſion, what an unworthy, what an ungenerous, what an ungrateful creature is every ſinner! Who notwithſtanding the majeſty of heaven condeſcended, to take our fleſh upon him, and to live an uncomfortable life on earth, to leave an example, and to give aſſurance of his inclination to pardon all ſuch as ſhould truly repent them of their ſins; and notwithſtanding he ſubmitted to a moſt painful and ignominious death, at once to teſtify his utter abhorrence of the leaſt iniquity, and his deſire to reſtore the offender: yet ſtill perſiſts in his evil courſes, and every moment of his life provokes the vengeance of the almighty. It is true, our act of grace is of the ſame extent as our lives. But, O ſinner! yet conſider, death may come upon you on a ſudden. Or ſay, a fit of ſickneſs ſeizes you: how are you ſure you ſhall then be willing to repent? It is not ſaying, Lord, Lord, will entitle you to heaven: and I know no ground we have to ſuppoſe, that a few prayers, which the fear of death extorts from us, will make our peace with God, and entitle us to the joys of heaven. To the impenitent, therefore, Chriſt's

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death is not only rendered ineffectual, but will moſt aſſuredly add a dreadful weight to their condemnation.

But the blood of Jeſus Chriſt ſpeaks far better things to you, ye righteous; joy, and reſt, and glory, and immortality, his ſufferings have procured for you. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for he that redeemed your ſouls from death is preparing a glorious manſion for you, in his heavenly kingdom.

Proper reflections on the life and ſufferings of our Saviour Chriſt will be of infinite ſervice to us all, and afford, in a peculiar manner, great comfort and conſolation to thoſe gloomy ſpirits, who are filled with unjuſt apprehenſions, that God will not accept their imperfect ſervices; who fear, that, notwithſtanding they endeavour to do their duty, they ſhall fall ſhort of heaven at laſt. Conſider then, ye that are thus diſturbed in mind; God hath promiſed forgiveneſs to all ſuch as are truly ſorry for their ſins, and who determine to lead a holy life for the future. Do you think, that he, who endured the ſhame and pain of the croſs, is deſirous of your deſtruction? Can his ſufferings ſuggeſt ſuch things to your mind? On the contrary, muſt not he be a kind, a merciful, a loving friend, who lays down his life, to ſave you from death? From whence then theſe ill-grounded fears? It is not for you but for the incorrigible ſinner, who does not endeavour to be righteous, that the flames of hell are preparing. As for you, your very fears demonſtrate, that your heart is right before God. Take comfort, therefore, all ye that are thus heavy laden; for your Redeemer, who gave his precious life a ranſom for you, hath aſſured you, that he will give you reſt,

SERMON VI.

For EASTER-DAY.

The Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt.

LUKE XXIV. 34.

THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED.

FROM the emphatick term—INDEED—here made uſe of by the Evangeliſt, we may clearly perceive how variouſly the world was affected at the ſurpriſing news of our Saviour's reſurrection.

The diſciples heard it with aſtoniſhment, it is true, but at the ſame time with pleaſure, as being an important circumſtance which they moſt ardently wiſhed to hear; and the meſſage of thoſe travellers from Emmaus, which informed them that the Lord was riſen indeed, was ſuch a comfort and conſolation, ſuch a ſpecifie cordial to them, that it came to be preſcribed to ſucceeding Chriſtians as an effectual and infallible antidote againſt all worldly fears; the Lord is riſen, growing into a common form of congratulation upon their caſual meeting with one another.

If therefore Chriſt be really riſen; if in him all men ſhall be made alive; every man in his own order; Chriſt the firſt fruits, afterwards

afterwards they that are Chriſt's at his coming: then it is certain that we are under the moſt indiſpenſable obligations to embrace the terms of his holy goſpel; that we have the ſtrongeſt motives imaginable to pay a chearful obedience in all things and to be very diligent and indefatigable in his ſervice. This promiſed, our preſent endeavours ſhall be devoted to confirm your faith, to ſtrengthen your hope, to animate your zeal, and to encourage your obedience. In order to which, we ſhall demonſtrate that the aſſertion in our text, namely, the Lord is riſen indeed, is a matter unexceptionally well atteſted: which will appear beyond all diſpute, if we only conſider the qualifications of the witneſſes to it; the nature and circumſtances of the fact, as by them ſeverally related; and the ſtrict ſcrutiny it underwent before it was univerſally received.

As to the qualifications of thoſe who were eye witneſſes: they were not only men of integrity, but of unqueſtionable abilities. Men of ſuch unblemiſhed characters, and ſo open and ingenuous, that it can hardly be imagined they ſhould either be ignorant of this important tranſaction, or miſtaken in the particulars, or under the leaſt temptation to diſguiſe or miſrepreſent the fact.

For the whole queſtion is this, namely, whether that identical Jeſus, whom the Jews had crucified, were actually riſen or not; that he was ſo, was invariably affirmed by very conſiderable numbers, and particularly by five hundred at once, who had ſeen him alive after his crucifixion. Amongſt the reſt there were twelve who made it their principal buſineſs to bear witneſs to it, and to publiſh it abroad wherever they went. And theſe were men, who had been his diſciples, and his daily companions for three years ſucceſſively; men, who were too well acquainted with the perſon of the deceaſed to be impoſed upon by any counterfeit; men, who were ſo far from being haſty to believe it themſelves, that when firſt it reached their ears, it paſſed but for an idle tale, betraying, as they imagined, from the novelty of it, rather the credulity of the women,

women, who brought the tidings, than deſerving any ſubſtantial credit. And when the news was again confirmed to them by two of the diſciples, who had ſeen him before; and when he appeared himſelf to them all together, even whilſt they were conferring and diſputing about ſo improbable an occurrence, yet ſtill their fears and ſcruples were, in their opinion, ſo juſt and well grounded, that they could not be eaſily convinced of the reality of his reſurrection for they imagined, that they had only ſeen a ſpirit. And even after he had obviated that ſuppoſition by ſhewing them his hands and his feet, and permitting them to handle him, their belief was ſtill ſuſpended, with aſtoniſhment, extaſy, and joy, not yet perfectly ſatisfied till he had prevailed on them to recollect, that this was nothing more than what he himſelf had formerly foretold; and had opened the eyes of their underſtanding ſo far as to diſcern that the prophecies in the ſacred ſcriptures, relating to this important article were thereby moſt remarkably fulfilled.

Nay, even after this, one of their aſſociates, who happened at that juncture of time to be abſent, was ſo very hard of belief that he was determined not to give credit to the report of his brethren, notwithſtanding their unanimity therein, unleſs he alſo might be permitted, as after a few days he was, to ſee the print of the nails in his hands, and thruſt his finger into his wounded ſide.

And now it was, and not till after this ocular demonſtration, that they were all of them entirely and ſatifactorily convinced that the report was real fact. And in truth, there was no poſſibility of a deluſion in this caſe; for here was no ſpirit but ſubſtantial fleſh and blood fairly repreſented to a large aſſembly of men, who had not only their ſight, but their feeling, and were permitted to make the beſt uſe they could of both; neither was their any impediment intervening in the mean time, to prevent them from forming a right judgment. For our bleſſed Lord appeared to them

them with all the advantage they could reaſonably deſire; not in the duſk of the evening, to conceal himſelf from a diſtinct view, nor in a glare of light, to dazzle their eyes; but in ſerene and open day, not glancing by them with a ſudden motion, or ſtanding ſtill at a diſtance, but familiarly converſing with them face to face; not only once or twice, leaving them ſtill in ſuſpenſe, but frequently, and in the moſt familiar manner, whereby he ſhewed himſelf to be their identical Lord and maſter, and as actually exiſting then, as before, by "many infallible proofs, being ſeen of them forty days, "and ſpeaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Now one would think it an abſolute impoſſibility, that there ſhould be any deluſion in all this; or that the force of imagination ſhould ſo far enchant the ſenſes of ſo many perſons, for ſo long a time, and upon ſo many various occaſions, as to poſſeſs them with a notion, that they actually ſaw a perſon living that had been dead; a perſon with whom they had been intimately acquainted; one, the ſubſtance of whoſe fleſh and bones they had felt; one, in ſhort, with whom they had ſo familiarly converſed at times, for forty days ſucceſſively, when there was, in reality, no ſuch perſon in being, nor any thing like it, to juſtify the report.

If this be poſſible, it muſt be impoſſible, at the ſame time, to diſtinguiſh between dreaming and waking; nay, we cannot ſo much as be certain, whether we are now diſcourſing on Chriſt's reſurrection or not; but if the evidence of ſenſe be in any caſe to be relied on, it muſt be allowed in this, above all others, ſince here the utmoſt precaution imaginable was uſed, and no poſſible obſtruction can be pretended.

We may ſafely, therefore, conclude that the Apoſtles account of our Lord's reſurrection is true; provided their fidelity in the narration be but equal to their abilities, and the opportunity they had of coming to the knowledge of the truth. And of this there can no doubt remain with any one, who is but well informed of the cha-

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racter they maintained, and the manner of their deportment on this intereſting occaſion. They were humble, and they were honeſt; they were artleſs, and they were undeſigning. They had not indeed the advantage of a liberal education, but then they were the more unpractiſed in fineſſe and policy. There is an air of faithfulneſs and ſimplicity in all their writings; their teſtimony is delivered with all manner of freedom and openneſs and without the leaſt chicanery or reſerve. As they profeſſed themſelves to be the diſciples of that maſter in whoſe mouth no guile was ever found, ſo the doctrine they taught was perfectly agreeable to thoſe inſtructions which they had received from him, and conformable to his illuſtrious example. Their practice alſo was ſuitable to their profeſſion, for they renounced the hidden works of diſhoneſty, and the ways of craftineſs, and choſe rather, by the manifeſtation of the truth, to recommend themſelves to men's conſciences in the ſight of God. Their reputation, moreover, was ſo clear in this reſpect, that their moſt malicious enemies never attempted to tax them with the leaſt inſincerity.

And after all, is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that men, ſo ſtrict both in their doctrine and morals, and ſo ſober and ſedate in all their converſation ſhould raſhly venture the forfeit of an unblemiſhed reputation all at once, by inventing and publiſhing ſo groſs, ſo enormous a falſehood, had it in reality been one? For if they actually and in ſincerity believed themſelves to be the proſelytes and teachers of the true religion, why ſhould they unneceſſarily preſs falſehood into the ſervice of truth? Why ſhould they betray a good cauſe with ſuch an improper defence? And if they had artfully attempted to impoſe a falſe religion upon the world, is it not incredibly abſurd, that they ſhould, at their firſt ſetting out, apparently croſs their own deſign, and expoſe themſelves as ſhameleſs impoſtors, by telling a marvellous ſtory, to common apprehenſions

ſo improbable, and ſo obvious to be detected upon the ſlighteſt enquiry?

Nor is it to be conceived what motive ſhould put them upon ſo extravagant an undertaking. They had no proſpect of profit, honour, or pleaſure to urge them on, and tempt them to forget the difficulty and danger with which they were ſurrounded. No! they well knew that the whole weight of temporal intereſt lay in the oppoſite ſcale. They were not to be then told that the name of a chriſtian was odious, and an abomination to the Jews, and but a cold recommendation to the Romans; they knew, in a word, that diſgrace and poverty, confinement and perſecutions, torture and death itſelf were likely to be their portion in this world. And alas! what could they hope for in the next, if their conſciences had accuſed them, that they were making a mockery of God, and moſt ſhamefully abuſing the credulity of mankind, by a notorious and glaring impoſture?

It is impoſſible, therefore, it ſhould be any thing leſs than a certain and indiſputable knowledge of the truth of what they related, and a zeal for God's honour, and the good of their fellow-creatures, and a ſure and certain hope of an ample recompence and reward in another life, that could make them ſo reſolute and intrepid, in giving their reſpective teſtimonies, notwithſtanding the worſt of inconveniences that could poſſibly attend them on that account, and notwithſtanding, the loſs of their lives was the immediate reſult of their atteſtations.

Againſt the witneſſes, therefore, of our Saviour's reſurrection, there can reſt no fair or plauſible exception. And indeed, if we conſider the nature and circumſtances of the fact which they relate, we ſhall find them ſuch as render it an impracticable thing to pretend it was done, and to perſuade people to believe it, unleſs it had actually occurred.

For they inform us very preciſely of the time when he aroſe, and by whom it was firſt diſcovered; that the ſtone was rolled away from

from the door of the ſepulchre, and the linen-cloths found there, in which he was wrapped; and the napkin with which his head was bound; but that the body was not there. We are told, moreover, that Peter and another of his diſciples ran haſtily to the ſepulchre, when firſt they were alarmed with the report, went in, ſaw, and believed. That the keepers themſelves were ſtartled at the earthquake, and trembled and ſtood aghaſt, like dead men, at the ſight of the angel, who came to roll away the ſtone, with a countenance piercing as lightning, and raiment white as ſnow. And as ſoon as they could recover themſelves out of their ſurpriſe, they went into the city, and ſhewed unto the chief prieſts all the things that were done. Now, were the ſoldiers confederates with them? or were they thunder-ſtruck, by phantoms of their own cowardly imagination?—Their ſtory, however, was very aſtoniſhing; and it is wondrous ſtrange, that the whole city of Jeruſalem ſhould be ſo incurious, as that no one ſhould think it worth his while to examine into the truth of ſo momentous a concern; eſpecially ſince, if it were falſe, the impoſture was ſo eaſy to be found out; for the only trouble that would have attended the enquiry would be a viſit to the ſepulchre, to ſee if it were ſafe and unmoleſted, and the body ſtill remaining in its firſt ſituation; and if it were, to ſummon the people together, and expoſe it to public view in confutation of that idle, groundleſs rumour that was ſpread about in regard to its ſudden removal.

But, perhaps, the chief prieſts and rulers having now, as they imagined, got a fair riddance of him, whom they feared and deteſted, might be grown negligent and ſecure, and not at all apprehenſive of any farther trouble either from him, or his deſpicable diſciples and followers. No, no!—far from it, jealouſy is ever upon the watch; and the miracles which they had ſeen him perform, whilſt he lived, gave them no ſmall uneaſineſs, when he was dead; eſpecially as he had expreſsly foretold his own reſurrection.

For that reaſon they made their timely application to Pilate, ſaying, " Sir, we remember this deceiver ſaid, while he was yet alive, " After three days I will riſe again. Command therefore, that " the ſepulchre be made ſure until the third day, leſt his diſciples " come by night, and ſteal him away, and ſay unto the people " that he is riſen." And having obtained their requeſt, they went themſelves, " and made the ſepulchre ſure, ſealing the ſtone, and " ſetting a watch."

So that, it is plain, there was all the precaution poſſible taken to prevent a deluſion, and abundance of ſubtilty and artifice uſed beſides, to blaſt the credit of his reſurrection, if it ſhould prove true. For it ſeems evident enough, that they had come to a reſolution before hand how to account for it; a private bribe, they preſumed, to the ſoldiers, would anſwer the ends propoſed, who would not ſcruple to aſſert, that his diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away while they ſlept. But if the ſoldiers were, in reality, aſleep, ſure we are, that the malice of the chief prieſts and phariſees was awake but to very little purpoſe. For how could they who were aſleep, be appealed to as eye witneſſes of what paſſed? How could they affirm, that he was ſtolen away? Or how could they tell but that he might be riſen?

Had there been any ſtreſs to be laid upon ſuch an inconſiſtent aſſertion as this, no doubt it would have been made uſe of to accompliſh the fortunate diſcovery; eſpecially when they were provoked to it by the apoſtles, who ceaſed not to proclaim Jeſus, and the reſurrection, wherever they went. Nay, even when they met with the ſevereſt reprehenſions, and were further charged under the penalty of the heavieſt corporeal puniſhments, to hold their peace, yet they ſtill perſiſted, with the utmoſt intrepidity, in declaring that the God of their fathers had raiſed up that very Jeſus, whom they had ſlain, and hanged on a tree. This unexpected and bold affirmation incenſed them to the higheſt degree. For when

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they heard it, they were cut to the heart, and took counſel to ſlay them. But why did they not take counſel to diſprove them, to confute them, to confound them, by the notable teſtimony of their watchful ſoldiers? Alas! truth was too prevalent to be oppoſed by ſuch weak artifices; the word of God grew, and encreaſed in a miraculous manner, notwithſtanding all their violent efforts to ſuppreſs it. And therefore we may firmly conclude, that the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt was a tranſaction moſt unexceptionably well atteſted.

We ſhall now proceed to ſhew, that this fact, once admitted, will afford an inconteſtible proof of the truth of the chriſtian religion in general. For it muſt be granted, that wherever a real miracle is wrought in confirmation of any doctrine, that has beſides the marks or characteriſtics of intrinſic goodneſs upon it; that doctrine has all the advantage, in point of evidence, all the degree of certainty, that any article, revealed from God, can poſſibly ſtand in need of.

And it muſt be farther granted, that the raiſing up Jeſus Chriſt from the dead was not only a miracle, but a miracle far above the power of any created being to accompliſh. For to reſtore life is ſuch an act, as no finite creature can be ſuppoſed capable of performing by any inherent virtue of his own; and therefore the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt muſt be aſcribed to the immediate will or power of the almighty.

Taking it for granted, therefore, that no power leſs than that of God, could ever have accompliſhed ſo arduous an undertaking; the reſurrection of Chriſt may be pronounced a moſt undeniable proof, not only of the chriſtian religion in general, but of all Chriſt's declarations concerning himſelf, his miniſterial office, and the end of his coming into the world; of the doctrines, precepts and promiſes that he left behind him to be faithfully recorded by his Evangeliſts and Apoſtles. And this is the very uſe that they made of it, when

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they firſt ſo boldly preached that doctrine,—for thus St. Peter cloſes his argument: "Therefore let all the houſe of Iſrael aſſuredly know, "that God hath made that ſame Jeſus, whom ye have crucified, "both Lord and Chriſt; and again; him hath God exalted with "his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour for to give repentance "to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins."

In ſhort, if Chriſt be an impoſtor, he is an impoſtor that appeared with more ample and honourable credential than any true prophet ever did. For, over and above all the miracles which he wrought, and the many predictions for which he was ſo famous whilſt he lived, he foretold the manner of his own death, and the certainty of his reſurrection conſequent thereupon; which being verified in the event, and by a power apparently divine, it muſt either follow that God gave his teſtimony and countenance to a falſity which would be blaſphemy to aſſert, or elſe, that Jeſus was, of a truth, what he gave himſelf out to be; namely, a teacher ſent from heaven, and the only ſon of God. So that the objects of faith have, in the laſt reſult, the ſame certainty with the objects of ſenſe or knowledge. For the only aſſurances we have, that we are not deceived in things whereof we have a clear and diſtinct perception is, becauſe a true and a gracious God, will not permit us to be deluded, or impoſed on, in the right uſe of thoſe faculties which he has conferred upon us. And the very ſame aſſurance we have, that we ſhall not be impoſed on in the exerciſe of our faith, which reſts itſelf upon his infallible atteſtation.

The proper application of this ſolemn event will be this; that the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt is an indiſputable proof of our reſurrection to life at the laſt day, and the doctrines immediately dependent thereon; ſuch, for inſtance, as are the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of an impartial retribution for the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. For though the permanency of the ſoul was a dark and difficult problem in philoſophy;

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yet the poſſibility of it has been demonſtrated, beyond all contradiction, in the reſurrection of our Lord. And that which was poſſible in his caſe, is alſo poſſible in ours, ſhould the ſame omnipotent being think proper to interpoſe. And he that hath all power committed to him both in heaven and earth; he, who died and roſe again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living, he hath given us the ſacred pledge of his word that we ſhall in like manner go unto our father which dwelleth in the higheſt heaven.

This was the conſolation which he gave to Martha when overwhelmed with grief on account of the death of her brother Lazarus.—"I am the reſurrection and the life, ſaith the Lord: he that "believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live: and "whoſoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die." And St. Paul, for that reaſon, eſtabliſhes the belief of the latter, as a neceſſary conſequence upon the former. If we believe, ſays he, that Jeſus died and roſe again, even ſo, them which ſleep in Jeſus will God bring with him. And again, ſpeaking of a day appointed by the ſupreme Being for the general judgment both of the quick and the dead, by the man Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ordained;—he adds, that he hath given aſſurance of this unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead. And in ſpeaking on the ſame topick in another place, he declares—that as in Adam all die, ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive; that as we have borne the image of the earthly man, we ſhall alſo bear the image of the heavenly. St. Peter likewiſe bleſſes God on this account,—that he hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead into an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reſerved in heaven for us. From all which paſſages, it is abundantly clear, that the reſurrection of Chriſt, if either he himſelf, or his apoſtles, truly underſtood its virtue and power, is an invincible proof, and a ſure pledge of a general reſurrection; in which all

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good chriſtians ſhall be raiſed, in reſemblance and conformity to Chriſt, their head and grand exemplar.

To conclude, therefore, as the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, and the faith and hope founded thereupon, will undoubtedly, procure to all true believers life and immortality; ſo it highly concerns us to conſider what the event of unbelief muſt be: many would, perhaps, content themſelves without the hopes of glory and future happineſs, if that was all:—but that is not all.—For the dead ſhall be raiſed, whether you like it, or like it not; all who are in the grave ſhall come forth; ſome to life, and ſome to condemnation, according to the things done in the body.—Nothing can ſecure to us more effectually an happy ſtate in futurity, than a conſtant and ſteady belief and expectation of the reſurrection of the dead.—This will convince us, that thoſe things which we are now doing are not ſuch trifles as to be ſoon forgotten, or attended with conſequences only for to-day or to-morrow, but they are things long to be remembered, things noted down in God's book, and will be expoſed to view at the great day, in the preſence of men and of angels, and be attended with conſequences, through all the age of eternity, to our great honour and happineſs, or to our great confuſion and miſery.

"Do thou, therefore, O Almighty God, who, through thine only "begotten Son Jeſus Chriſt, haſt overcome death, and opened unto "us the gate of everlaſting life, put into our minds good deſires, "and bring the ſame to good effect, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, "who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghoſt, ever one "God, world without end. Amen."

SERMON

SERMON VII.

For ASCENSION-DAY, or the SUNDAY after.

The Departure of Jeſus Chriſt out of this World.

ACTS I. 9.

AND WHEN HE HAD SPOKEN THESE THINGS, WHILE THEY BEHELD, HE WAS TAKEN UP, AND A CLOUD RECEIVED HIM OUT OF THEIR SIGHT.

OUR bleſſed Lord, when he "had given commandments "unto the Apoſtles whom he had choſen; to whom alſo "he ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion, by many in- "fallible proofs, being ſeen of them forty days, and ſpeaking of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:" at length led them forth to the ſummit of the mount of Olives, near Bethany, about a mile diſtant from Jeruſalem, and there took a moſt affectionate leave. He had before conveyed to them a very gracious and endearing meſſage—"Go to my brethren, and ſay unto them, "I aſcend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God "and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the diſciples,

" that ſhe had ſeen the Lord, and that he had ſpoken theſe things " unto her." Now as the high prieſt was wont to bleſs the people at his going into the Holy of Holies, ſo did the Son of God then give his followers his ſolemn and final benediction.—" And when " he had ſpoken theſe things, while they beheld, he was taken " up, and a cloud received him out of their ſight." Or, in other words, when he had bleſſed them, he moved up ſlowly, ſo as they might for ſome time follow him with their eyes; till being come at ſome conſiderable height, a cloud received him out of their ſight, and hindered their diſcerning him any further. Thus did our bleſſed Redeemer, in the ſame human body he received in the womb of the bleſſed virgin, viſibly aſcend up into heaven. With what joy he was received by the bleſſed inhabitants of that place, is a matter better to be conceived than deſcribed.

For the proof of his aſcenſion we have the teſtimony of the apoſtles and certain diſciples, who were eye-witneſſes of the fact. Angels alſo added their ſuffrage to this tranſaction; for no ſooner had the apoſtles loſt ſight of their beloved Maſter; while they looked ſtedfaſtly toward heaven, behold! two men ſtood by them in ſhining garments. Angels, in the ſhape of men, glorious in their array. And thoſe diſciples were afraid, and bowed their faces to the earth. And the angels ſaid, " Ye men of Galilee, why ſtand " ye gazing up into heaven? this ſame Jeſus which is taken up " from you into heaven, ſhall ſo come, in like manner as ye have " ſeen him go into heaven." This bright diſplay then of his Almighty power, in the preſence and in the open view of his diſciples, was thus manifeſted, in order to confirm and convince them of the certainty and reality of the fact. Though they did not ſee him riſe from the dead; yet they ſaw him actually aſcend into the clouds, and kept ſtill gazing till thoſe clouds received him out of their ſight. And the reaſon we may preſume was this, becauſe it was highly requiſite that thoſe who were by the appoint-

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ment of the great Son of God himſelf, to plant and preach the goſpel, ſhould have inconteſtible proof of ſuch matters, as they were deſtined boldly to declare; and gloriouſly to confirm, by chearfully enduring cruel ſcourgings, inſulting taunts, and all the horrid forms that temporal death could be arrayed with, or wicked and infatuated men contrive.

There are two evidences for the truth of this awful fact, who well deſerve attention. Namely, St. Stephen and St. Paul. St. Stephen had a more diſtinct viſion of our bleſſed Saviour in his glorified ſtate, than even the apoſtles themſelves at the time of the aſcenſion, for they ſaw it in its full effect. When ſtanding before his partial judges, who were waiting and wiſhing to enſnare him in his talk;—the Holy Ghoſt took full poſſeſſion of him; wherefore, ſpurning the fears of death, he ſaid: "Behold! I ſee the "heavens opened, and the Son of Man ſtanding on the right hand "of God."—The door of Paradiſe, you ſee, was turned on its everlaſting axis; and he ſaw the Son of Man actually in poſſeſſion of that throne, to receive which was one end of his aſcenſion: for ſurely had not St. Stephen been indeed thus honoured, he would never, by ſuch an ill-timed and uſeleſs exclamation, have pulled immediate martyrdom on his head.—The laws againſt blaſphemy, in which light he could not but know that his words would be conſidered, were too rigid in themſelves, and too ſeverely executed, for a man to think of trifling in that particular; nor on the other hand could the viſion be merely imaginary, or the effect of delirium; for ſo ſudden a tranſition from a courſe of ſedate, ſtrong, and well-digeſted argument, to infatuation and madneſs, cannot well be ſuppoſed, ſo that St. Stephen muſt undoubtedly be allowed to be both a competent judge, and a credible witneſs.

St. Paul gives us the ſtrongeſt reaſon in the world to believe, that he himſelf was favoured in like manner, and that too more

than once. Hear his own words before his royal and illuſtrious auditors. They are worthy your ſerious attention.

" Then Agrippa ſaide unto Paul, Thou art permitted to ſpeake " for thyſelfe. So Paul ſtretched foorth the hande, and anſwered " for himſelfe.

" I think myſelfe happie, king Agrippa, becauſe I ſhall anſwere " this day before thee of all the things whereof I am accuſed of " the Jewes: chiefly, becauſe thou haſt knowledge of all cuſ- " tomes, and queſtions which are among the Jewes: wherefore, " I beſeeche thee to heare me patiently. As touching my life " from my childhoode, and what it was from the beginning " among mine own nation at Jeruſalem, know all the Jewes, " which knewe mee heretofore, if they would teſtifie, that after " the moſt ſtraite ſect of our religion I lived a Phariſe. And now " I ſtand and am accuſed for the hope of the promes made of " God unto our fathers. Whereunto our twelve tribes inſtantly " ſerving God day and night, hope to come: for the which hopes " ſake, O king Agrippa, I am accuſed of the Jewes. Why ſhould " it be thought a thing incredible unto you, that God ſhould rayſe " againe the dead? I alſo verely thought in my ſelfe, that I ought " to doe many contrary things againſt the name of Jeſus of Nazaret. " Which thing I alſo did in Jeruſalem: for many of the ſaintes " I ſhut up in priſon, having received authoritie of the high prieſtes, " and when they were put to death, I gave my ſentence. And " I puniſhed them throughout all the ſynagogues, and compelled " them to blaſpheme, and being more madde againſt them, I " perſecuted them, even unto ſtrange cities. At which time, " even as I went to Damaſcus with authoritie, and commiſſion " from the high-prieſtes, at midday, O king, I ſaw in the way a " light from heaven, paſſing the brightneſs of the ſunne, ſhine " round about me, and them which went with me. So when we " were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voyce ſpeaking unto mee,

" and

" and ſaying in the Hebrewe tongue, Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt
" thou mee: It is hard for thee to kick againſt prickes. Then
" I ſaid, who art thou Lord? And he ſaid, I am Jeſus whom
" thou perſecuteſt. But riſe and ſtande up on thy feete: for I
" have appeared unto thee for this purpoſe, to appoint thee a
" miniſter and a witneſſe, both of the things which thou haſt
" ſeene, and of the things in the which I will appeare unto thee,
" delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto
" whome nowe I ſende thee, to open their eyes, that they may
" turne from darkenes to the light, and from the power of Satan
" unto God, that they may receive forgiveneſſe of ſinnes, and
" inheritance among them, which are ſanctified by faith in me.
" Wherefore, king Agrippa, I was not diſobedient unto the
" heavenly viſion, but ſhewed firſt unto them of Damaſcus, and
" at Jeruſalem, and throughout all the coaſtes of Judea, and then
" to the Gentiles, that they ſhould repent, and turne to God,
" and doe workes worthy amendment of life. For this cauſe the
" Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.
" Nevertheleſſe, I obtained helpe of God, and continue unto this
" day, witneſſing both to ſmall and to great, ſaying none other
" things, than thoſe which the prophets and Moſes did ſay ſhould
" come, to wit, that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, and that hee ſhould be
" the firſt that ſhould riſe from the dead, and ſhould ſhewe light
" unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

" And as hee thus anſwered for himſelfe, Feſtus ſaide with a
" loude voyce, Paul, thou art beſides thyſelfe: much learning
" doeth make thee madde.

" But hee ſaide, I am not madde, O noble Feſtus, but I ſpeake
" the wordes of trueth and ſoberneſſe."

So far St. Paul.

Brethren, uſe your own judgement in this matter; could any thing but an evidence of a very convincing nature have been able

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to effect ſo ſudden and ſo ſurpriſing a revolution, as that he who ſet out from Jeruſalem, breathing ſlaughter and perſecution, ſhould enter into Damaſcus a determined confeſſor. Could ought but a viſion of a very alarming aſpect have produced ſo great a change, as that he who was yet beſmeared with the blood of the firſt and then only martyr, ſhould become the moſt ſtrenuous aſſertor of thoſe very doctrines which had drawn from him his ſuffrage againſt St. Stephen? If to theſe teſtimonies we add the exact accompliſhment of thoſe events which were profeſſedly to be the conſequents on ſuch aſcenſion, particularly the effuſion of the Holy Spirit, which took place about ten days after it, we can no longer heſitate to believe that Jeſus Chriſt did actually and viſibly aſcend into heaven. Will not then the aſcenſion of our bleſſed Lord, naturally ſuggeſt to us, that we ſhall alſo ariſe from the grave, aſſume a body purified by death, and be the happy partakers of thoſe joys which our ever-merciful Father, our all-powerful Redeemer, our beneficent Saviour, our moſt gracious Brother, hath procured for us?—O, glorious connection! O, tranſporting hope!—far, far ſurpaſſing our weak comprehenſion!

——————— "Thou haſt fulfill'd
" Thy words, Creator bounteous and benign!
" Giver of all things fair."

MILTON.

We could never have fathomed ſuch tranſcendent goodneſs, had not the inſpired apoſtles, prophets and evangeliſts, aſſured us of ſuch honour and ſuch happineſs. " Beloved," ſays St. John, the boſom friend of our dear Lord,—" Beloved, now are we the ſons " of God; and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, but we " know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we " ſhall ſee him as he is"—mighty in glory and power.

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As the ever to be adored Jeſus Chriſt ſuffered death on the croſs; the third day roſe again to life; and not long after viſibly aſcended into heaven; after he had promulged the moſt explicit promiſes, that all the faithful, to the very end of time and of the world, ſhould finally be partakers of his glorious reſurrection; and as his body, on his departure out of this world, was ſpiritualized and cloathed with immortality; will not reaſon as well as revelation inform us, that our bodies muſt alſo neceſſarily undergo ſome ſuch ſurpriſing change, in order to our being duly qualified for the performance of thoſe high employments to which we ſhall be preferred in our exalted ſtate? In order likewiſe to render us proper companions for God's holy angels, and before we can be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, we muſt be diveſted of our tenements of clay: for thoſe glorious manſions cannot be inhabited but by bodies of a more refined nature. And as an evident proof thereof, the apoſtle tells us, that though thoſe who ſhall be alive at the laſt day ſhall not in reality die as others have done before them; yet their bodies ſhall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump, for the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, and we ſhall be changed, and be veſted with a body like unto Chriſt's glorious body, with which he aſcended to the Father.

When therefore the ſaints ſhall be admitted into the bleſſed regions of everlaſting day, "they ſhall ſhine," ſaith the prophet Daniel, "as the brightneſs of the firmament, and as the ſtars "for ever and for ever." Our bleſſed Saviour hath alſo declared, "that the righteous ſhall ſhine forth as the ſun, in the kingdom "of their Father." The Apoſtle St. Paul tells the Philippians, that their vile bodies, that is to ſay, their fleſh and blood, when changed, ſhall be cloathed with light as with a garment. And if the ſaints in heaven will become thus beautiful and glorious, after their transfiguration; we cannot imagine, that their bodies

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ſhall be deficient in the leaſt particular, in regard to their beauty and exact ſymmetry and proportion. Every ſpot and blemiſh, every defect, how ſmall ſoever, will be perfectly taken away; their appearances will admit of nothing that is either mean or contemptible: their eyes ſhall be as radiant as light itſelf, and their aſpects comely, and decked with everlaſting grace.

It is not, we imagine, to be doubted, but that the ſouls of the ſaints will be infinitely delighted at their happy re-union with their bodies, when they perceive them ſo ſurpriſingly improved. By virtue of this happy change, this new garment with which they are cloathed, they are duly qualified to become inhabitants of thoſe glorious manſions, and be admitted, not only to ſit in the aſſembly of the angels, but to ſtand before the preſence of the Almighty himſelf.

This earthly body, which we carry about with us in this vale of tears, depreſſes the ſoul, is a ſevere check to the faculties of the mind; but when it has once put on its ſpiritual property, it will be ever ſprightly and free; always ready and willing to ſerve the moſt noble operations of the ſoul. Their pleaſures never cloy, or become taſteleſs and inſipid. They reſt not night nor day, ſays the evangeliſt St. John, but with the utmoſt extaſy and tranſport, are for ever employed in grateful thankſgivings to their moſt bounteous benefactor.

There are ſome pleaſures indeed, ſome ſenſations, that they were poſſeſſed of in this life, that they will not retain, but then the reaſon is, that ſuch enjoyments would rather diminiſh than any ways augment their felicity. In the manſions of the bleſſed we ſhall hunger no more; thirſt no more; neither ſhall we marry, or be given in marriage, but become as the bleſſed angels of God in heaven.

The noble ſenſations however will aſſuredly remain in our exalted ſtate, but even thoſe will be ſpiritualized and improved.

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" I will greatly rejoice in the Lord," ſays Iſaiah; " my ſoul ſhall " be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments " of ſalvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteouſneſs, " as a bridegroom decketh himſelf with ornaments, and as a bride " adorneth herſelf with her jewels." Our ſight, in all probability, will not only be exerciſed in heaven, but be delighted in ſuch manner, as we cannot, whilſt here on earth, be capable of conceiving. Though our eyes cannot in this life bear the direct beams of the ſun, yet they will in the next be enabled to converſe with an innumerable company of much brighter luminaries. When we become inhabitants of the other world, we ſhall behold the inconceivable ſplendour of our bleſſed Redeemer.—" Father," ſays he, " I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me, be with me " where I am; that they may behold my glory."

It is very probable that our ſenſe of hearing likewiſe will be modified nearer to perfection; for as we are ſocial beings, we cannot ſuppoſe we ſhall at any time be either ſilent or moroſe. And as celeſtial ſpirits muſt be inceſſantly pouring forth ſongs of praiſe to their great Creator, their muſic muſt be harmoniouſly tranſporting.

The laſt and moſt important improvement, in regard to our bodily perfections, will be this: They will be cloathed with immortality. " When Jeſus Chriſt, who is our life, ſhall appear, " then ſhall ye alſo appear with him in glory. Then we which " are alive and remain, ſhall be caught up together with them in " the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and ſo ſhall we ever be " with the Lord." Wherefore comfort one another with theſe words, " Death ſhall be ſwallowed up in victory." At that happy period, death himſelf ſhall die; no more ſhall the grim tyrant oppreſs and prey upon the ſons of men. Our frail bodies, whilſt here on earth, are daily expoſed to diſeaſes and decays of nature; but when once they are thus happily glorified, they ſhall droop no more, but

be for ever vigorous, for ever ſhall they enjoy an uninterrupted health. This laſt advantage enhances all the others. This ſecures the enjoyment of all the reſt. If the pſalmiſt, when he was contemplating on the works of nature, and on man, her maſter-piece, could cry out with admiration; " O Lord, how fearfully and wonderfully " are we made!" much more reaſon will every good man have to laud and magnify the divine bounty and benevolence, for that body of his that has put on a property of ſpirits, has been thus happily changed, thus glorioufly improved, inſomuch as that the inhabitants of heaven only can attain to ſuch perfections. This we learn from the ſacred ſcriptures, and from thence we may draw this natural concluſion; that when the righteous man has once undergone this happy change; when this earthly body of his has been once cloathed with immortality, and been ſpiritualized; when he once awakes from the ſleep of death; his labours are at an end, and his happineſs beginning. Though in this life it doth not appear what the good man ſhall be, but when he is once admitted an inhabitant of heaven, the pſalmiſt aſſures him for his comfort, that he will be ſatisfied with God's likeneſs. And the evangeliſt confirms the aſſertion by telling us, that good men after death ſhall be like their Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, for they ſhall ſee him in that glorious ſtate to which he was introduced by his triumphant aſcenſion.

Here let us, by the aid of a lively faith, raiſe our ſouls to the throne of grace, and addreſs our heavenly Father in pious ſtrains of meditation.

" O moſt merciful Saviour! O moſt gracious God! haſten, haſten " we beſeech thee, that long wiſhed for day; the day of recom- " pence and reward, that what we now behold with the eyes of " faith, and in a glaſs darkly; we may ſee diſtinctly and with open " face;—namely, our triumphant Redeemer, our merciful Media- " tor; and be filled with the joy of his countenance. That what " we now reach forward to by a diſtant hope, we then may be in

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" actual poſſeſſion of: that what we now deſire, according to our " poor capacity, we may then enjoy by means of thy abundant love, " O moſt merciful Saviour! O moſt glorious God! Fain would we " expatiate on this delightful theme, and even now anticipate the " joys of thy glorious preſence. But words are too weak and " thoughts too narrow for this exalted contemplation; and there- " fore, O heavenly Father, rather give us grace to apply ourſelves to " what our preſent condition is in ſome meaſure qualified for!— " Praiſe, humble, fervent, and ſincere. Let us praiſe thee for thine " ineſtimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jeſus " Chriſt. Let us praiſe thee for thy humble incarnation and birth " in our nature, whereby thou waſt made ſubject to the law for us. " Let us praiſe thee for thy meritorious ſufferings and death, where- " by thou waſt offered up a propitiatory ſacrifice for the ſins of men. " Moreover we laud and praiſe thee for thy reſurrection from the " dead, whereby we feel a lively hope of acceptance and ſalvation. " We praiſe thee for thy glorious aſcenſion into heaven, whereby " thou haſt taken poſſeſſion of the happineſs above for us, and art " veſted with power to bring us alſo to glory upon the terms of thy " goſpel. Finally, we praiſe thee, O God the king of glory, who " haſt thus exalted thine only ſon Jeſus Chriſt with great triumph " into thy kingdom in heaven: and we further preſume to beſeech " thee to leave us not comfortleſs; but to ſend to us thine Holy " Ghoſt to comfort us, and exalt us unto the ſame place whither " our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt is gone before, who liveth and reigneth " with thee and the Holy Ghoſt, one God world without end. " Amen."

SERMON VIII.

For WHIT-SUNDAY.

The Miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt.

ACTS II. 32, 33.

THIS JESUS HATH GOD RAISED UP, WHEREOF WE ALL ARE WITNESSES. THEREFORE BEING BY THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD EXALTED, AND HAVING RECEIVED OF THE FATHER THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST, HE HATH SHED FORTH THIS WHICH YE NOW SEE AND HEAR.

OUR Church at this particular ſeaſon exhorts us to commemorate with joy and thankfulneſs the miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt; one of the moſt important events that ever adorned the annals of mankind; ſeeing that the influence of it extends to all ages, and the benefit conſequent upon it, is no leſs than the converſion of A WORLD. Upon this occaſion that power from on high exerted itſelf, wherewith our Lord promiſed to endue thoſe Evangeliſts to whom he had committed the care of

finiſhing the great work, which though begun by himſelf, was to be carried on by other perſons. It muſt be admitted therefore that the circumſtances which concurred to give authority and efficacy to their undertaking, are too weighty to be paſſed over in ſilence on this ſolemn feſtival.

It was at the time of the Jewiſh Pentecoſt, immediately after our bleſſed Saviour's paſſion and death, that the apoſtles and choſen witneſſes of his reſurrection and aſcenſion "were all with one accord in "one place. And ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven, as of "a ruſhing mighty wind, and it filled all the houſe where they "were ſitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, "like as of fire, and it ſat upon each of them: and they were "all filled with the holy ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other "tongues, as the ſpirit gave them utterance." When the fame of this ſtupendous viſitation was noiſed abroad at Jeruſalem "the "multitude came together and were confounded, becauſe that every "man heard them ſpeak in his own language the wonderful works "of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, ſaying one to another, what meaneth this?—Others mocking ſaid, "theſe men are full of new wine. But Peter ſtanding up with "the eleven, lift up his voice, and ſaid unto them, ye men of "Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jeruſalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for theſe are not drunken "as ye ſuppoſe, ſeeing it is but the third hour of the day. But "this is that which was ſpoken by the prophet Joel, And it "ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, ſaith God, I will pour out "my ſpirit upon all fleſh: and your ſons and your daughters ſhall "prophecy, and your young men ſhall ſee viſions, and your old men "ſhall dream dreams, &c. Ye men of Iſrael; hear theſe words; "Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt "of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know: him being delivered by the

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" determinate counſel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken,
" and by wicked hands have crucified and ſlain. This Jeſus hath
" God raiſed up, whereof we all are witneſſes. Therefore being by
" the right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father
" the promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, he hath ſhed forth this, which ye
" now ſee and hear."

The diſciples of our bleſſed Saviour, after his aſcenſion, until this Miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt were full of expectations, though troubled with many fears. They had great reaſon to believe that they ſhould experience the ſevere uſage that was foretold them by their Lord; that they were to be hated by all men for his name ſake; to be caſt out of the ſynagogues, and that thoſe who killed them ſhould think they did God ſervice. Thus when the ſun of righteouſneſs was ſet, they eaſily foreſaw the ſky would be overcaſt, and the weather grow tempeſtuous; that their enemies would exert their malice; and that troubles, ſorrows, and death itſelf would be their portion.—Had they been left to themſelves to have indulged theſe gloomy apprehenſions they would have thought of nothing more than flying from the ſtorm that threatened them, and of procuring ſhelter and retirement. Now to ſupport their ſpirits under theſe dreary and uncomfortable proſpects, our Saviour had aſſured them, that the dangers and difficulties they were to encounter with ſhould not be more than they could bear, but proportioned to their ſtrength; and as the one was to be extraordinary, the other ſhould be much more ſo: for, notwithſtanding his viſible preſence ſhould be taken from them, they ſhould not be deſtitute of the divine aſſiſtance, but he would give them a power which ſhould atteſt the truth of their doctrine by many ſigns and wonders; a power which ſhould inſpire them with ſtrength and courage to reſiſt the bittereſt calumnies and ſlanders of infidelity; therefore they ought not to give way either to grief, ſorrow, or deſpondency.—After his reſurrection, he gave them all the aſſurance imaginable, that he would

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them another comforter, when he was gone to the father. He expounded to them likewiſe in all the ſcriptures the things concerning himſelf; and that they ſhould not be aſhamed of the doctrine of the croſs; that it behoved him to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day, to the end that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name, throughout all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem: and moreover, he aſſures them, that he would ſend the promiſe of the father upon them, in ſuch a manner, as that the whole world ſhould be amazed and aſtoniſhed. In the mean time he exhorts them to remain quiet, and knit together at Jeruſalem, until this promiſe ſhould be fulfilled.

He had before given them power to act as his Ambaſſadors; to proclaim his laws, and to require the obedience of all nations; to convey this power unto others, and to abſolve the truly penitent from their ſins; but notwithſtanding this authority, and their formal admiſſion to the higheſt order of the church; yet they remained without full ſtrength, until the ſolemn and magnificent Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, by which their tongues being fired from heaven, their oppoſers were not able to reſiſt the wiſdom by which they ſpake.

We have great reaſon to admire the patience and unſhaken conſtancy of the apoſtles, from the firſt moment they received the promiſe of the holy Ghoſt, till the accompliſhment of it: "And "when the day of Pentecoſt was fully come, they were all with "one accord, in one place." Now Pentecoſt was always kept the fiftieth day after the paſſover; and was a great and ſolemn feaſt, wherein they celebrated their deliverance out of Egypt; and alſo the memorial of the promulgation of the law which was given them from Mount Sinai; and for this very reaſon it was ſometimes called the feaſt of the law. Upon that day the new law began to be ſolemnly publiſhed in the moſt pompous and magnificent manner. The former law was proclaimed by earthquakes;

quakes, fire and ſmoke, thunderings and lightnings: but the new law appeared with light and majeſty to revive, not with terror and amazement to affright and aſtoniſh the world.

Certain of our commentators "conclude from St Paul's earneſt "deſire of being at Jeruſalem on the very day of Pentecoſt, "as recorded in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, that the ob- "ſervation of it as a chriſtian feſtival is as old as the apoſtles: but "whatever St. Paul's deſign was, we are aſſured that it hath been "univerſally obſerved from the very firſt ages of chriſtianity. It "was denominated Whit-Sunday, partly becauſe of thoſe vaſt dif- "fuſions of light and knowledge which were then ſhed upon the "apoſtles in order to the enlightening of the world; but prin- "cipally from the white garments, which they that were baptiſed "at this time put on. For except in caſes of neceſſity they admi- "niſtered baptiſm at no other times than Eaſter and Whitſuntide. "At Eaſter, in memory of Chriſt's death and reſurrection,—cor- "reſpondent to which are the two parts of the chriſtian life repre- "ſented in baptiſm, dying unto ſin, and riſing again unto righte- "ouſneſs. And at Whitſuntide in memory of the apoſtles being "then baptiſed with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire; and of their "having themſelves at that time baptiſed three thouſand ſouls; "this communication of the Holy Ghoſt to the apoſtles being in "ſome meaſure repreſented and conveyed by baptiſm. After theſe "times they made it part of their feſtivity the week following to "congratulate the acceſs of a new chriſtian progeny. The new "baptiſed coming each day to church in white garments, with "lights before them, in token that they had now laid aſide their "works of darkneſs, and were become the children of light, and "had made a reſolution to lead a new, innocent and unſpotted life. "At church, thankſgivings and prayers were made for them; and "thoſe that were at years of diſcretion,—for in thoſe times many "ſuch came in from Heatheniſm,—were inſtructed in the princi-

" ples and ways of chriſtianity. But afterwards, when moſt of the " baptiſed were infants, and ſo not capable of ſuch ſolemnities, this " cuſtom was altered, and baptiſm adminiſtered at all times of the " year, as with us now, and as at the beginning of chriſtianity."

But to return to the apoſtles, who, from the paſſover to Pentecoſt waited the accompliſhment of the promiſe. The miracles they had ſeen wrought by our bleſſed Saviour, and his reſurrection from the dead, fully convinced them, that they might reſt ſecurely on his word; that there was no room for doubts or diſtruct; for they were raiſed ſo far in their hopes above all diffidence and unbelief, that they were,—from what they had experienced of their Redeemer's power,—certain of the performance of his promiſe. When the day of Pentecoſt was fully come, ſays the Evangeliſt, they were all with one accord in one place.

The holy ſpirit cannot dwell in thoſe breaſts, where diſcord, anger and animoſity have their ſeat. All wild and unruly paſſions, all unjuſt and unmanly ſuſpicions, all jealouſies and unfriendly humours, muſt be huſhed in ſilence at the approach of this heavenly gueſt. He chooſes for his reſidence thoſe pure and innocent ſouls, that breathe love and candour, ſimplicity and meekneſs. The ſecret receſſes of the mind muſt be made ſmooth, even and regular, hatred and envy, hypocriſy and deceit, are inconſiſtent with his preſence. He loves to fix his habitation where there are ſome beautiful lineaments of himſelf. The charity and benevolence, the mutual love and deſire of promoting the happineſs and welfare of one another was ſo conſpicuous in the primitive chriſtians, that we muſt neceſſarily allow, they were actuated by a ſpirit ſuperior to the world. This unanimity and benevolence, this peace and love, is what the chriſtian religion triumphs in beyond all others whatſoever. Our Saviour made it the characteriſtic of his diſciples: " Hereby ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye love " one another."

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The wiſdom that is from above is pure, peaceable, eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocriſy. God is LOVE, and they that dwell in him, dwell in LOVE. And St. John tells us, that the love of God and his neighbour, did actuate and enliven his ſoul to the higheſt warmth of benevolence.

If therefore we conſider the Apoſtles in the interval between Chriſt's aſcenſion and the Miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt; before they boldly and openly proclaimed the wonderful things of God in the name of Jeſus; we ſhall find their unity and unanimity did, in a wonderful manner, ſupport and uphold them: and every comfort, and every degree of chearfulneſs, that any one found in himſelf, was communicated to the relief of the others, upon all occaſions. They prayed with one heart, and with one mind; and their prayers went up to heaven as the evening-ſacrifice, and with united force prevailed. The ears of the almighty are always open to receive the petitions of thoſe who are knit together in charity; their deſires are wafted to the ſkies on the wings of fervent love; the devotions, that are harmoniouſly poured forth on earth, reſound with an echo in the heavens; as if the inhabitants of thoſe bleſſed manſions had begun already the moſt intimate friendſhip, with thoſe of the lower world.

This benevolent diſpoſition of mind, filled the Apoſtles ſouls with the moſt happy tranquility; and though they were not yet actually inſpired, as they afterwards were, with the gifts of the holy ghoſt; yet this unity gave them ſome gentle foretaſtes of the ineffable joys of heaven. Thoſe triumphant ſpirits, who move in a higher orb, are diſſolved in love; it is the element in which they move; it is neceſſary to their exiſtence, the very life of their ſoul, and eſſential to their eternal and uninterrupted happineſs. It was this that diſpoſed the Apoſtles and diſciples of our bleſſed Lord to a more full and clearer underſtanding of the great truths of the king-

dom of heaven. " Jeſus ſaid unto his diſciples, If ye love me, " keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he " ſhall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you " for ever; even the Spirit of truth." Now TRUTH is the food, the beſt, the kindlieſt nouriſhment of the mind; and before the ſoul is capable of receiving ſuch a gueſt, it muſt be calm as a ſummer's ſea, when not a breath of wind diſturbs its ſurface: All rugged, harſh, ill-natured paſſions muſt be alienated from it, before it can enter with full force and vigour, and ſhed its benign influence upon the mind. Proud and unmortified men may make a great oſtentation of their wiſdom and knowledge; but we muſt know TRUTH in its divine energy and ſtrength, before we are made free from ſin. If then we view the apoſtles as not met together with ſouls calm and ſerene, and ſtrengthened by thoſe inviſible ſupports of love and faith; then we ſhall eaſily perceive how well prepared they were to receive the Holy Ghoſt in that plentiful meaſure, and for thoſe great and glorious ends it was deſigned. This conſideration will neceſſarily bring us to reflect on the miraculous power with which the holy Spirit deſcended upon them.

" For ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven as of a ruſhing " mighty wind, and it filled all the houſe where they were ſitting." And this was certainly a very proper emblem of the Holy Ghoſt; for to this our Saviour had compared it in his diſcourſe with Nicodemus. " The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt " the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, nor " whither it goeth; ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit." And here it may not be improper to obſerve, that the publication of the goſpel was attended with the ſame divine preſence and power, that the giving of the law was; though not with the ſame circumſtances of terror, which the apoſtle St. Paul ſtrongly notices, when he ſets forth to us the difference between the two diſpenſations of the law and the Goſpel. " For ye are not come," ſays he,

" unto

" unto the mount that might not be touched, and that burned " with fire; nor unto blackneſs, and darkneſs, and tempeſt, and " the ſound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice " they that heard it, intreated that the word ſhould not be ſpoken " to them any more." Theſe were all circumſtances of great horror; but at the coming down of the Holy Ghoſt there was no trumpet, nor terrifying voice; no thunder, no darkneſs, no tempeſt; only the ſound, as it were, of a ſtrong guſt of wind, as a ſenſible ſignification of a divine preſence and power. This ſound, indeed, began with the firſt ages of the world, in the days of Noah, and in the time of the ſucceeding prophets, until the coming of our bleſſed Saviour; but was never ſo loud, nor ſo diſtinct, until the Apoſtles were inſpired. It is ſurpriſing to think how very ſoon God fulfilled his promiſe; " I will give the Hea- " then for thine inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for " thy poſſeſſion:" for Chriſtianity was ſpread over the world in a very ſhort time by twelve poor men; and if the adoration of one ignominiouſly crucified at Jeruſalem, ſhould, within the compaſs of a few years, ſuperſede the rites and ceremonies of all nations, we cannot but acknowledge, that an almighty Being guided, directed, and ſupported them. The holy Pſalmiſt means one greater than Solomon, where he ſays, " All kings ſhall fall down " before him; all nations ſhall ſerve him." How ſublime and magnificent is that prophecy of Malachi! " From the riſing of " the ſun to the going down of the ſame, my name ſhall be great " among the Gentiles; and in every place incenſe ſhall be offered " unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name ſhall be great " among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts." Theſe promiſes were effectually fulfilled, when the Apoſtles were endued with power from on high, by the miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt. " Many of them which heard the word believed, and the number " of the men was about five thouſand. And believers were the

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" more added to the Lord; multitudes both of men and women, " and multitudes out of the cities round about Jeruſalem." We may ſafely affirm therefore, no religion in the world did ever make ſo ſwift a progreſs, or ſpread its wings ſo wide, as the Chriſtian. Iſaiah propheſied, " that the iſles ſhould wait for his law;" and this was quickly fulfilled, when the goſpel, with its enlivening rays, cheared our hardy forefathers, who were almoſt ſavages, reformed their ſouls, and taught them to be men. The haughty Romans, the ſoft Grecians, the effeminate Perſians, renounced their favourite idol, and bowed the neck to his eaſy yoke. In ſhort, almoſt all men met together in their acknowledgments of the bleſſed Jeſus. The confuſion of languages ſcattered the old world; but the gift of tongues poured upon the apoſtles, united all nations in the moſt harmonious ſociety. This ſudden ſound from heaven, which preceded the miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt; this ruſhing wind, which filled all the houſe where they were ſitting, did not blow from earth, nor from the regions of the air, but from heaven itſelf, the throne of the moſt High. It was a wind that blew with majeſty rather than fury, ſtrength rather than boiſterouſneſs. They felt ſome heavenly charm, that raiſed their attention to ſome high and extraordinary event; and the ſurprize of its ſwiftneſs could not hinder a ſecret joy, an elevation of ſpirit ſurpaſſing all deſcription; which well told them, this was the mighty voice of God, which filled them with inexpreſſible delight; their ſouls were calm and compoſed, and tranquility had taken her ſeat within them. What they uttered after their inſpiration was full of light and majeſty; a doctrine, that not only aſſured its hearers of immortality, but taught them alſo the infallible method to arrive at it; a doctrine, infinitely ſuperior to the moſt laboured ſpeculations of all the philoſophers.

Now it is evident, that no ſuch change could be wrought by natural cauſes; for men, actuated by natural principles, can go no higher

higher than ſuch maxims can carry them: but to crucify the fleſh, with the affections and luſts thereof, to forgive injuries, and to deſpiſe all things that our appetites run headlong into, muſt be the effect of Divine Aſſiſtance. But moreover, the immediate effect it had upon the apoſtles, clearly demonſtrated it to have come from heaven. That men illiterate, and without education, ſhould ſpeak the languages of all nations, who, a little before, underſtood but one language, and that perhaps imperfectly, was certainly a bright diſplay of the almighty power. This extraordinary effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt came down upon the Apoſtles, according to the nature of their high and difficult employment, and the circumſtances of the church at that time; but it was not neceſſary to be continued in that viſible and extraordinary manner, but to fall in gentle drops to the end of the world.

Having conſidered what was heard, let us go forward to what was ſeen; "and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like "as of fire, and ſat upon each of them:" CLOVEN tongues, to ſignify the diverſity and diſtribution of them; this gift being imparted to every one of the apoſtles: "theſe tongues ſat upon each "of them." The apoſtles, who were formerly ſilent, now ſpake the wonderful things of God; and the Jewiſh proſelytes, from all nations, that were now at Jeruſalem, when this was noiſed abroad, met together, and were confounded and aſtoniſhed, becauſe every man heard them ſpeak in his own language; "and they were all amazed "and marvelled, ſaying one to another, Are not all theſe which "ſpeak Gallileans? And how hear we every man in our own "tongue wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes, &c. we "do hear them ſpeak in our own tongues the wonderful works of "God." It was now that the Apoſtles appeared to be the true diſciples of him who ſpake as never man ſpake, who taught as one having authority. Their words carried conviction with them, and pierced the very ſouls of men; the ſtreams of heavenly eloquence

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ran ſmoothly from their tongues; they did not affect ſtudied graces and elaborate periods, but delivered their meſſage in the plaineſt words, mixed with the greateſt power. With what courage did they upbraid the men of Iſrael with the murder of the Lord of life? Who amongſt the Scribes and learned Phariſees durſt encounter the wiſdom of St. Stephen, when filled with the Holy Ghoſt? His very countenance was ſufficient to deſtroy their weak reaſonings; for "whilſt they looked ſteadfaſtly upon him, they ſaw his face, as it "had been the face of an angel."

The apoſtles, therefore, were filled with the Holy Ghoſt; and they who impute to any ordinary cauſe their miracles, divine reaſonings, and aſtoniſhing progreſs in the converſion of all nations, not only ſubvert the principles upon which religion ſtands, but muſt be wilfully blind; ſince it was a fact performed not in a corner, but conſpicuous to the whole world. All civilized nations, both antient and modern, acknowledge, that it is reaſonable for mankind to expect a divine revelation in ſome extraordinary caſes; and if all men agree in this, that by the ſtrength of reaſon we may diſtinguiſh a true revelation from what is falſe and counterfeit, is it not ſurpriſing that men ſhould be hardened againſt the Chriſtian religion; ſince the miraculous inſpiration, which we are here met together to commemorate this day, hath ſtampt upon it all the characters of divinity that our ſouls can think of, even when they examine things moſt accurately and calmly?

To conclude. Since it is undeniably true, from various well-atteſted facts, that the apoſtles were inſpired, in a very particular manner, with the Holy Ghoſt; let us thank Almighty God, who has given us ſuch glorious, ſuch undeniable aſſurances of the truth of our moſt holy religion; that he hath made our hope ſo fixed, that it cannot be removed. For when we read, that the Holy Ghoſt deſcended upon the apoſtles in this manner, we may conclude infallibly, that our Lord is not only riſen from the dead, but

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that he ſits with the higheſt power at the right hand of the Father; nor can, nor ought we to ſuppoſe, that becauſe he is encircled with glory and majeſty, he is any more unmindful of us, than when he was encompaſſed with our infirmities: and in like manner, as he made good his promiſe to the apoſtles, and ſent upon them the Holy Ghoſt, to plead his cauſe againſt infidelity; ſo we may ſecurely rely upon his word, that he will raiſe us again to life and immortality: and though he ſuffers our earthly tabernacle to be crumbled into duſt and aſhes, and mingled with all the ſcattered atoms of the creation; yet let us be aſſured, "he will change our "vile bodies, that they may be like unto his glorious body; ac- "cording to the mighty working, whereby he is able to ſubdue "all things to himſelf.

"Do thou, therefore, O holy Spirit, who proceedeſt from the "Almighty Father and his moſt bleſſed Son, powerful Advocate, "and ſweeteſt Comforter, infuſe thy grace, and deſcend plentifully "into our hearts; enlighten the dark corners of thoſe neglected "dwellings, and ſcatter there thy chearful beams. Dwell in our "ſouls, which long to be thy temple: water thoſe barren ſoils, "and make them fruitful with thy dew from heaven. Heal the "lurking diſtempers of our minds; kindle thy holy fires in our "breaſts, that they may flame out in a bright and devout zeal; "and warm and cheriſh our ſpirits, ſouls and bodies. Make us "to drink of thy ſpiritual pleaſures, and let their heavenly ſweet- "neſs ſo correct our palates, as to leave no inordinate deſire for "the groſs, unhealthful fulſomeneſs of worldly delights. Judge "us, O Lord, and defend our cauſe againſt the ungodly people. "Teach us to do the thing that pleaſeth thee; for thou art our "God. We believe, that in whomſoever thou dwelleſt, the Fa- "ther and the Son do likewiſe come; and happy, thrice happy is "he, who is honoured with ſo glorious, ſo divine a gueſt! O that "it may pleaſe thee graciouſly to viſit us, thou kindeſt Comforter

" mourning ſouls, thou mighty defence in diſtreſſes, and ready
" help in time of need; thou purifier of all inward pollutions, and
" healer of all ſpiritual wounds and diſeaſes; thou ſtrength of the
" feeble, and raiſer of them that fall; thou putter down of the
" proud, and teacher of the meek and humble; thou Father of
" the fatherleſs, and juſt avenger of deſolate widows; thou hope
" of the poor, and refreſhment of them that languiſh and faint;
" thou Star and Guide of them that ſail in the tempeſtuous ſea of
" this world; thou only haven of the toſſed and ſhipwrecked; thou
" glory and crown of the living, and only ſafeguard of the dying!
" O holy ſpirit, make us fit to receive thee, and condeſcend to our
" infirmities, that our meanneſs may not be diſdained by thy great-
" neſs, nor our weakneſs by thy ſtrength! All which we beg for
" the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt our only Saviour, who in the unity of
" thee, O holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth with the Father, One
" God, world without end. Amen."

SERMON

SERMON IX.

For TRINITY-SUNDAY.

The Communication of Chriſt with Nicodemus.

JOHN III. 1, 2.

THERE WAS A MAN OF THE PHARISEES, NAMED NICODEMUS, A RULER OF THE JEWS: THE SAME CAME TO JESUS BY NIGHT.

THOUGH it is a very old, yet it is a very juſt diſtinction, that there may be a multiplicity of things above our reaſon, without being any ways inconſiſtent with it. How imperfect is our knowledge of the moſt common actions of nature? The wiſeſt men are at a loſs to account for the growth of an animal, a plant, or indeed of the ſmalleſt grain whatever. And if this be the deſpicable defeat of human nature; if we are thus puzzled and perplexed and ſee ſuch objects as daily preſent themſelves before us, but through a deceitful medium, what wonder is it, if we are loſt and bewildered in our notions of the ſupreme Being, and of the various revealed myſteries of our moſt holy religion? Since therefore, this day is ſet apart by the Church, for our public and ſolemn

acknowledgment of our belief in the ever bleſſed Trinitiy; I imagine, it will not be improper to employ the preſent diſcourſe entirely upon that topick: and I hope to treat of it in ſuch manner as not only to convey information to the moſt illiterate of my hearers, but that all of us,—how enlarged ſo ever our faculties,—may be induced with humility to reflect on this ſacred myſtery; and ingenuouſly to acknowledge it to be infinitely beyond all human penetration. We muſt indeed, wait for a full diſplay of the divine perfections, till our final change ſhall come, being fully convinced that now, whilſt we "remain here upon earth, we know but in part, and ſee through a "glaſs darkly."

We have choſen for our text on this occaſion the introductory part of a very remarkable conference which was held between our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, and a perſon named Nicodemus, a man high in office, a ruler of the Jews and member of their ſanhedrim. This inquiſitive doctor came to our bleſſed Lord with as much ſecreſy and precaution as poſſible, by night,—probably too, very late, actuated by a fear leſt any of his aſſociates ſhould be jealous of his conduct, and ſuſpect him as inclinable to abandon their communion in order to become a diſciple of one who was preaching up a new doctrine, and laying the foundation of a new religion.

In the beginning of this ſolemn communication, this ruler of the Jews teſtifies his peculiar veneration for our Lord, by conferring on him the title of RABBI, which thoſe of his church and communion beſtowed on none but their moſt learned and celebrated doctors. This inſtance of reſpect being thus formally paid; they immediately enter upon a ſubject of the higheſt importance, in the proſecution of which it appears that the utmoſt learning of thoſe times was but deploreable ignorance. "Art thou a maſter of Iſrael, and knoweſt "not theſe things?"

This important conference is the well choſen portion of ſcripture appointed by the judicious compilers of our moſt excellent liturgy to be

be annually read on this ſolemn feſtival.—For the following words expreſly mention God the father, whoſe immediate power and preſence was with Jeſus Chriſt in every word that he ſpoke, and in every action in which he was engaged. "Rabbi, we know that "thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do theſe "miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him." In another place, towards the cloſe of the conference, as expreſs mention is made of God the Son—"No man hath aſcended up to heaven, but "he that came down from heaven, even the ſon of man which is in "heaven." No leſs explicit is the mention of God the Holy Ghoſt, who moving upon the waters of baptiſm, effects a new creation, as he did by moving upon the face of the waters in the old creation. "Verily, verily I ſay unto thee, except a man be born of water, "and of the ſpirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Our Evangeliſt, who by way of eminence is called St. John the divine, in his myſterious book intitled THE REVELATION, repreſents the angels or bleſſed ſpirits, who pay their conſtant attendance at the throne of grace, as adoring, with the moſt profound reverence and veneration the three holies.—"Holy,—holy,—holy,—Lord God "Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."—This will excite every true Chriſtian to pay that Trinity in Unity the like tribute of wonder and worſhip; for by their ſo doing, whilſt they conſtitute the Church militant here on earth, they anticipate, as it were, the conſtant employment of the Church triumphant in heaven. And as thoſe angels and bleſſed ſpirits abovementioned by our Evangeliſt in his viſion, are our grand exemplars for the acknowledgment of theſe myſterious truths, ought we not to copy after them? To fall down as they are repreſented to do, before the throne of the majeſty on high, and with the humbleſt admiration, worſhip a depth, which by our profoundeſt reſearches we ſhall never be able to fathom? Which indeed we ſhould never attempt to penetrate, for we are to be juſtified by faith. "Abraham believed God, and it was account-

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" ed to him for righteouſneſs. They which are of faith, the ſame " are the children of Abraham, they are bleſſed with faithful Abra- " ham. Finally, brethren, ye are all the children of God by faith " in Chriſt Jeſus."

Here perhaps ſome ſerious enquiring Chriſtian will ſtep forth and ſay: Are all inveſtigations of theſe ſacred truths improper, imprudent or preſumptuous? Brethren, ſuffer me to ſpeak freely to you of this matter. Let us not be led away by worldly wiſdom; let us not indulge a wiſh to be held one iota learned above what is written. Could we underſtand the myſteries of our holy religion, they would be no longer myſteries. Were all things as evident as daylight to our ſenſes, what need of faith? What merit in believing? What title to our Lord's appoſite benediction. " Bleſſed are they " that have not ſeen, and yet have believed."

With humble ſubmiſſion then to ſo reſpectable auditors—Here fix your foot.—THE SACRED WRITINGS.—No inhabitant of Bedlam ever caught his qualication for that place by reading his bible. It is dangerous treading the paths of controverſial divinity. In ſuch diſquiſitions the humility of the Chriſtian is too often loſt amidſt the labyrinths of human learning; and pride in that department finds more votaries than piety. The way to get to heaven is plain before us. The prophets and evangeliſts are more infallible guides than philoſophers and ſchoolmen. Your admiration and reverence where you do not underſtand; and your obedience where you do, is the ſureſt road to peace here, and happineſs hereafter. Your own conſciences will tell you feelingly enough when you purſue crooked paths; and when you act uprightly your very hearts will leap with with joy. That you may be ſatisfied we have a ſeal and ſanction for our advice, hear the word as delivered in the book of Job. " Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? Canſt thou find out the " Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canſt thou " do? Deeper than hell, what canſt thou know?" As therefore this

this myſterious doctrine of the Trinity is altogether founded on divine Revelation, and confeſſedly placed beyond the comprehenſion of any finite creature; give me leave to ſuggeſt that the ſafeſt road we can poſſibly take, the moſt unexceptionable plan we can propoſe for our animadverſions on ſo profound and intricate a topick will be, to ſhew—the intimations we have of it in the books of the OLD TESTAMENT; and to confirm them by producing thoſe much clearer diſcoveries which we find made of it in the NEW. The reſult will be, that from a ſtrict and diligent examination of both, we may be enabled to infer, that nothing can poſſibly be more juſt and rational, than that we ſhould receive this myſterious truth as a fundamental article of our moſt holy faith.

In the firſt chapter of Geneſis,—where Moſes is giving a deſcription of the creation of the world, God is introduced as ſpeaking in conſultation with ſome other perſons.

" Let US make man in our own image, after our likeneſs." And in the eleventh chapter of the ſame book, where Moſes is ſpeaking of the builders of the city and tower of Babel, he introduces God making uſe of the following expreſſion of his anger on that account. —" Let US go down and there confound their language that they " may not underſtand one another's ſpeech."

The eighteenth chapter of Geneſis, wherein you will find related in what manner the Lord appeared unto Abraham; his promiſe of giving him a ſon in his old age; and his purpoſe of deſtroying Sodom;—conveys ſomething more than a mere intimation of a Trinity in the Godhead. Whoever reads that chapter with this view cannot but be ſtruck with the propriety of its being an appointed leſſon for this day.

In ſome places of the Old Teſtament God is named as ſuſtaining ſeveral capacities in one and the ſame ſentence. The royal pſalmiſt, for inſtance, has this remarkable paſſage,—namely,—" The Lord " ſaid unto my Lord, ſit thou at my right hand until I make thine

" enemies

" enemies thy footſtool."—And again,—Moſes ſpeaking of the deſtruction of Sodom, thus mentions that dreadful inſtance of divine vengeance.—" The Lord rained down fire upon Sodom from the " Lord out of heaven."

Theſe paſſages, however, can only be termed intimations; and therefore no great ſtreſs ought to be laid upon them, in a point which is much more explicitly revealed in the goſpel. Proceed we therefore to obſerve the clearer diſcoveries of this myſterious doctrine, which have been tranſmitted to us by the publication of the New Teſtament.

The firſt that occurs to us, is that paſſage relating to the bleſſed virgin Mary's becoming a mother. And this remarkable event is thus foretold by the angel Gabriel, as it ſtands recorded by St. Luke. —" The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the power of the " higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee, therefore alſo that holy thing " which ſhall be born of thee, ſhall be called the ſon of God." Here the three perſons are manifeſtly diſtinguiſhed from each other.—Here is in the firſt place, the Holy Ghoſt, or power overſhadowing. In the next, the higheſt whoſe power that ſpirit is; and the holy thing or perſon, who as he was born of a mother, impregnated by that divine power, had a juſt right and title to be ſtiled, upon that account, the ſon of God.

The next paſſage we ſhall produce, has relation to that remarkable incident, the baptiſm of our bleſſed Saviour, the ceremony whereof was adminiſtred by St. John, his herald and harbinger. " And Jeſus when he was baptiſed, went up ſtraightway out of the " water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he ſaw " the ſpirit of God deſcending like a dove, and lighting upon him. " And lo, a voice from heaven, ſaying, This is my beloved ſon, in " whom I am well pleaſed."—Here let us put the queſtion—What can be plainer than the ſeveral diſtinctions of the three perſons, expreſſed in this citation?—There is no need however to ſtop here:

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—Other, many other paſſages may be produced equally explicit. Attend to our bleſſed Lord himſelf: "I will pray the father and "he ſhall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you "for ever, even the ſpirit of truth." And again, in another place our gracious Redeemer thus addreſſes his diſciples: "When the "comforter is come, whom I will ſend unto you from the father, "even the ſpirit of truth, which proceedeth from the father, he "ſhall teſtify of me."—Now here are very apparently a diverſity of actions, perſons, and capacities. Here is the father, in thē firſt place, from whom the ſpirit proceeds; to whom the ſon makes his addreſſes; and by whom that comforter was given at the ſon's requeſt: the ſon petitioning the father; ſending the comforter from the father, and teſtified of by that ſpirit who was ſo ſent. In ſhort, here is the ſpirit prayed for, who is given by the father; ſent from the father by the ſon, teſtifying of the ſon, and continuing for ever with thoſe diſciples from whom the ſon had departed. "There "are three that bear record in heaven,—ſaith St. John,—the Father, "the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt: and theſe three are one. And "the word was made fleſh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his "glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father,—full of "grace and truth."

Again, the great and learned apoſtle St. Paul, in his Epiſtle to the Romans, has a very remarkable paſſage ſuitable to our preſent purpoſe, namely, "If the ſpirit of him that raiſed Jeſus from the "dead dwell in you, he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead ſhall "alſo quicken your mortal bodies, by his ſpirit that dwelleth in you." In this place the apoſtle manifeſtly refers to Jeſus the Son of God, raiſed from the dead, to the ſpirit of God, by whoſe power and influence he was raiſed; and to him that raiſed Jeſus, and ſhall raiſe all in whom that ſpirit dwells; and for this reaſon,—becauſe it is his ſpirit.

One ſtep more. "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the "Holy Ghoſt," all nations are appointed to be baptized, as the

ſtanding form of admitting members into the Chriſtian church. And in the name of all three, thoſe diſciples mentioned by St. Matthew were ſolemnly bleſſed. And thoſe congregations, or aſſemblies of proſelytes who were firſt admitted chriſtians by their being baptiſed in the name of the Father and the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt, have all the privileges belonging to that character implored for them by that general benediction which was inſtituted by St. Paul; namely, " The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the love of God, " and the fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt be with you all." And with this general benediction were thoſe churches daily diſmiſſed.

We ſhall only add to theſe teſtimonies one obſervation, which we humbly conceive ought by no means to be omitted; namely, that it does not appear that this myſterious doctrine offers the leaſt affront to our reaſon, by any ſeeming contradiction thereto; for theſe three perſons are no where aſſerted or maintained to be three and one in the ſame reſpect; but one in ſubſtance, and three in the different mode of its communication. One in all thoſe perfections that are eſſential to the godhead: three in their mutual relations and capacities. Thus much we find ſtanding upon record in the writings of the inſpired penmen; and thus much by conſequence is revealed. And of ſo abſtruſe matters we can know no more than what is revealed. Finally brethren, aſk yourſelves this plain queſtion: Have I not the very ſame reaſon to believe God and man to be one Chriſt, as that the reaſonable ſoul and fleſh is one man? The ſacred ſcriptures require no more. They only record that there is ſome ſort of unity and diſtinction in the nature of the Deity, which though not repugnant to reaſon, is yet above all human conception. And thus the whole doctrine, however myſterious, lies in a very narrow compaſs and is very plain and explicit, being altogether a point of faith, and therefore incapable of any ſignificant debate, ſince the fact is as clearly revealed to us both in the Old and New Teſtament, as any other article of the religion we profeſs; but the manner in which it

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is effected, is indeed importleſs, hid from us, and will ſo remain to the univerſal reſurrection.

In this ſpecies of belief, the uſe of reaſon, within its proper ſphere, is not in the leaſt infringed or violated. Reaſon, by ſubmitting to things above her, and which we readily acknowledge that we cannot rightly comprehend, does not reſign her rights, nor reduce us to the extremity of believing any article or doctrine that is repugnant to common ſenſe or feeling.

To conclude. Since it is clear and certain from the writings of the Old and New Teſtament, that this myſterious doctrine of the Trinity is an indiſputable truth: ſince the belief of this doctrine is the diſtinguiſhing mark of a Chriſtian, and the profeſſion of it a fundamental article of our eſtabliſhed Church:—ſince we have all of us from our infancy devoted ourſelves, by receiving the ſacrament of baptiſm, and therein have ſolemnly vowed and promiſed a conſtant obedience, and humble adoration to the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, that divine Trinity in Unity; let us with the utmoſt veneration and humility of heart, agree with all the numberleſs celeſtial powers; let us join with cherubim and ſeraphim, with the holy angels, apoſtles, prophets and martyrs, and with the catholic church throughout the whole world, in ſinging that hymn of praiſe recorded firſt by the prophet Iſaiah, and ſanctified by the Revelation to St. John, namely, HOLY—HOLY—HOLY—LORD GOD ALMIGHTY—WHO WAS—AND IS—AND IS TO COME. And as far as mortals can follow heavenly patterns, let us be ever ready in the ſpirit of humility and faith to proſtrate our ſouls before that throne from whence "proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices; "and to give honour and thanks to him who liveth for ever and "ever, ſaying—Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive glory, and ho-"nour, and power, for thou haſt created all things, and for thy "pleaſure they are, and were created. O bleſſed Trinity!—omni-"potent!—eternal!—ever gracious JEHOVAH!

SERMON X.

For any SUNDAY in ADVENT.

The Humility of our Saviour's Appearance.

MATTHEW XIII. 54, 55, 56.

WHENCE HATH THIS MAN THIS WISDOM, AND THESE MIGHTY WORKS? IS NOT THIS THE CARPENTER'S SON? IS NOT HIS MOTHER CALLED MARY? AND HIS BRETHREN, JAMES AND JOSES, AND SIMON, AND JUDAS? AND HIS SISTERS, ARE THEY NOT ALL WITH US? WHENCE THEN HATH THIS MAN ALL THESE THINGS?—AND THEY WERE OFFENDED IN HIM.

IT is acknowledged, even by thoſe who are more ſolicitous to maintain the title of men of wit than that of Chriſtians, that there is a God, a providence, a future ſtate, and a difference between good and evil: but as to the Chriſtian religion, they ſee no further reaſon to embrace that, than as it happens to be the religion of the ſtate in which they live: if we demand what weighty reaſons they are able to produce againſt an inſtitution ſo holy and innocent in its deſign; ſo agreeable to the nature of God and men; ſo well contrived for the advantage of this and another life; ſo fully atteſted to come from heaven by the miracles wrought in confirmation of it; by the death of the Son of God, and of ſuch multitudes of martyrs; ſo certainly conveyed to us by the unqueſtionable tradition of all ages ſince the firſt delivery of it; this is the utmoſt

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they can object; namely, that it is founded upon ſuch an appearance of the Son of God, as was too mean and contemptible; and moreover that experience has evinced, the diſpenſation ineffectual for the reformation of the world. To remove, therefore, theſe groundleſs cavils againſt our religion, is our preſent purpoſe; and we are confident that we ſhall be able to demonſtrate, that there were no circumſtance in our Saviour's appearance or courſe of life, which were below the dignity of the Son of God, or inconſiſtent with the benevolent purpoſe of his viſit to the children of men. This is a ſubject truly worthy our moſt ſerious meditation at all times, but more particularly at this holy ſeaſon of Advent, ſolemnly ſet apart for the devout commemoration of the appearance of the Son of God on the great theatre of this world.

In order to elucidate this matter to ſatisfaction, we ſhall conſider the manner of our Saviour's appearance, the courſe of his life, and what thoſe objections were which his enemies principally urged againſt him.

When the admirers of ſublunary pomp and grandeur had heard that the Son of God was deſcending from heaven, in order to make his progreſs into this lower world, they could imagine nothing leſs, than that an innumerable company of angels muſt have been diſpatched before, to prepare a place for his reception; that all the ſovereigns and princes of the earth muſt have been ſummoned to give their attendance, and pay him the tribute of their adoration; that their ſceptres muſt have been immediately laid at his feet, and all the kingdoms of the earth united into one univerſal monarchy, under the empire of the Son of God; that the heavens ſhould bow down at his preſence to ſhew their obeiſance to him, the earth tremble and ſhake for fear at the near approaches of his Majeſty; that all the clouds ſhould clap together in one univerſal thunder, to congratulate him on his appearance in the fleſh, and tell the inhabitants of the world what cauſe they had to fear him, whom the powers of the heavens obey; that the ſea ſhould run out of its wonted

wonted courſe, and, if it were poſſible, hide itſelf in the hollow caverns of the earth; that the mountains ſhould ſhrink in their heads, to fill up the vaſt places of the deep; yea, that the ſun for a time ſhould be darkened, and the moon withdraw her light, to let the nations of the earth underſtand, that a glory infinitely greater than theirs did now appear to the world.—In a word, they could not imagine that the Son of God ſhould be born without the pangs and throws of the whole creation; and thought it was as impoſſible for him to appear, as for the ſun in the firmament to diſappear, without the notice of the whole world.—But inſtead of all this pomp, the humble Jeſus comes in private to the world; inſtead of giving notice of his appearance to the potentates of the earth, he is only diſcovered to a few artleſs ſhepherds, and three wiſe men of the Eaſt; inſtead of chuſing Rome or Jeruſalem for the place of his nativity, he is born at Bethlehem, a mean and obſcure village; inſtead of the glorious and magnificent palaces of the Eaſt or Weſt, he is brought forth in a ſtable, where the manger was his cradle, and his mother the only attendant about him. And according to the obſcurity of his birth was his education too: his youth was not ſpent in the imperial court at Rome, nor in the ſchools of the philoſophers at Athens, nor at the feet of the great rabbins at Jeruſalem; but at Nazareth, a place of no account among the Jews; where he was remarkable for the virtues proper to his age, modeſty, meekneſs, and obedience; all which he exerciſed to ſo eminent a degree that his kindred and acquaintance marvelled greatly, when at thirty years of age he began to carry into execution his high commiſſion—"Whence hath "this man this wiſdom, and theſe mighty works?"—Notwithſtanding this aſtoniſhment, notwithſtanding the miracles which he wrought, and the authority with which he ſpake, "they were of-"fended in him."—Thus, with all the inſolence of pride and place, exclaimed the rulers of their ſynagogue.—May we not even at this diſtance of time read ſomewhat of the temper of the men

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from their ejaculations.—" Is not this the carpenter's ſon?—Is not " his mother called Mary? and his brethren James and Joſes, and " Simon and Judas?—And his ſiſters, are they not all with us."—Can this then be the great deliverer? Can this be the Saviour of the world? Can this be the Meſſiah the ſon of David?—" Is not " this the ſon of Joſeph, whoſe Father and mother we know? " How is it then that he ſaith, " I came down from heaven?"—Thus the humility of our Lord's appearance cauſed him to be contemned of his countrymen. " But Jeſus ſaid unto them, A pro- " phet is not without honour, ſave in his own country, and in his " own houſe. And he did not many mighty works there, becauſe " of their unbelief." Thus deſpiſed and rejected of men and thoſe of his own houſhold, yet the rays of his divinity began to blaze forth through the clouds that had hitherto concealed him, inſomuch that the fame of his doctrine and the wonders which he wrought, reached not only to the court, but even to the preſence-chamber of the haughty Herod, who " ſaid to his ſervants, This is " John the Baptiſt, he is riſen from the dead, and therefore mighty " works do ſhew forth themſelves in him." The reputation of Almighty Wiſdom viſibly diſplayed in acts of benevolence and mercy towards the children of men did not reſt here, but extended to all the region round about. " And there came a fear on all: " and they glorified God, ſaying, that a great prophet is riſen up " among us; and that God hath viſited his people. The multitudes " alſo that attended his entry into Jeruſalem ſpread their garments " in the way, and cut down branches from the trees and ſtrewed " them in the way, and cried, ſaying, Hoſanna to the Son of Da- " vid: Bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hoſanna " in the higheſt." The meek and lowly Jeſus was not however in the leaſt elated, with theſe unuſual acclamations, though all the city was moved with eager deſire to expreſs their veneration and affection, yet he perſiſted in his wonted courſe of humility and ſelf-denial, refuſing to be made an earthly king; taking care of others,

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to the neglect of himſelf; feeding others by a miracle, and faſting himſelf to one; ſhewing his power in working ſtupendous cures, and his modeſty in concealing them; converſing with the loweſt of the people, and chuſing ſuch for his apoſtles as brought little to recommend them, except their innocence and ſimplicity: and after a life thus led with ſuch unparalleled humility; when he could add nothing more to it by his actions, he doth it by his ſufferings, and completes the diſtreſsful tragedy of his life, by what was accounted a moſt ſhameful and ignominious death.

This is a brief, but a true recital of all thoſe tranſactions which the admirers of the pomps and vanity of this wicked world are too apt to deem low and contemptible in our Saviour's appearance. A very little exertion of candour in our inveſtigation of our dear Redeemer's conduct and converſation, will convince us that ſuch an amiable and exemplary humility was more conſiſtent with the intent of his coming into the world, than all that ſtate and magnificence would have been, which the Son of God might eaſily have commanded. This is abundantly confirmed by the bleſſed Jeſus himſelf, in that dreadful hour of trial and diſmay. When the great Captain of our ſalvation, and his choſen followers, were ſurrounded by a multitude, with ſwords and ſtaves, from the chief prieſts and elders of the people. Thus ſpoke the Lamb of God: "Thinkeſt thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he "ſhall preſently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But "how then ſhall the ſcriptures be fulfilled, that thus it muſt be?" This glorious Viſitor quitted not the manſions of the bleſſed with ſo poor a purpoſe as to dazzle the eyes of mankind with the brightneſs of his glory, to amaze them with the terribleneſs of his majeſty, much leſs to make a ſhew of the riches and gallantry of the world to them; but he came upon far more noble and excellent deſigns, to bring life and immortality to light, to give men the higheſt aſſurance of an eternal ſtate of happineſs or miſery in the world to come, and the moſt certain directions for obtaining the

one and avoiding the other. And in order to that, nothing was judged more neceſſary by him, than to bring the vanities of this world out of that credit and reputation they had gained among fooliſh men; which he could never have done, had he declaimed ever ſo much againſt the futility of titles, riches and honours, if at the ſame time himſelf had lived in any degree of ſplendor. That he might not therefore ſeem to offer ſo great a contradiction to his doctrine by his own example, he makes choice of a life ſo remote from all ſuſpicion of deſigns upon this world, that though "the "foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had neſts, yet the ſon of "man, who was the Lord of all things, had no place whereon to "lay his head." And as he ſhewed by his life, how little he regarded the great things of this world; ſo he diſcovered by his death, how little he dreaded the evils of it: all which he did with intent to rectify the great miſtakes of men as to theſe particulars; that they might no longer riſque an eternal happineſs for the tinſelled vanities of this preſent life; nor expoſe themſelves to the utmoſt miſeries of another world, to avoid the frowns of this. From hence proceeded that generous contempt of the world, for which not only our Saviour himſelf, but all his true diſciples were ſo remarkable; to let others know, that they had nobler views, the hopes of which they would not part with for all that this world thinks great and deſirable. So that, conſidering the great danger moſt men are in by too paſſionate a love of theſe things, and that univerſal and infinite kindneſs which our Saviour had to the ſouls of men, there was nothing he could diſcover it in more, as to his appearance in the world, than by putting ſuch an affront upon the greatneſs and honour of it, as he did by ſo open a neglect of it in his life, and ſuch a generous contempt of it in his death and ſufferings. And who now, upon any pretence of reaſon, dare entertain a more unfavourable idea of our bleſſed Saviour, becauſe he appeared without the pomps and greatneſs of the world; when the reaſon of his doing ſo was, that, by his own humility, he might ſhew us the way to

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an eternal happineſs, to which he well knew how very hard it would be for thoſe men to attain, who meaſure things not according to their intrinſic worth and excellency, but their popular eſtimation; who think nothing great, but what makes them gazed at; nothing deſirable, but what makes them flattered and careſſed? But could they once be perſuaded, that the glories of the life to come are infinitely more valuable than all the gaities of this, they would think no condition mean, or contemptible, which tended to ſo glorious an end; none happy, or honourable, which muſt ſoon be dropped in the grave, or changed to eternal miſery. And that we might entertain ſuch thoughts as theſe, not as the gloomy effects of diſcontent and diſappointment, but as the ſerious reſult of our moſt deliberate enquiries into the true value of things, was the manifeſt deſign of our Saviour in the humility of his appearance, and of that excellent doctrine which thereby he recommended to the world.

But not only the manner of our Saviour's appearance, but of his converſation, gave great offence to his enemies, namely, that it was too free and familiar, among perſons of little or no reputation, amongſt publicans and ſinners; and at the ſame time, he declaimed againſt the ſtricteſt obſervers of the ſuperſtitious rigours and auſterities of life. And this, no doubt, was the great cauſe of that mortal hatred which the Phariſees conceived againſt him, though leaſt pretended, that even thereby they might confirm that charge of hypocriſy, which our Saviour ſo often draws up againſt them. And that ſuch ſevere rebukes ſhould ſo highly provoke them, is no matter of wonder; ſince they found this ſo gainful, and withal ſo eaſy a trade among the people, when, with a demure look and downcaſt countenance, they could defraud their brethren; and, under a ſpecious ſhew of devotion, could break their faſts by devouring widows houſes, and end their long prayers to God with acts of the higheſt injuſtice to their neighbours. It is true, our

Saviour, upon all occaſions, ſpeaks with the greateſt ſharpneſs againſt ſuch as theſe, as being the moſt dangerous enemies to true religion; for it was ſuch as theſe, that made men, whoſe paſſions were too ſtrong for their reaſon, to abhor the very name of religion, when they ſaw ſuch baſeneſs practiced under the profeſſion of it: when they ſaw men offer to compound with heaven for all their injuſtice and oppreſſion, with not a twentieth part of what God challenges as his due, they either thought religion to be a mere human device, or that theſe men's hypocriſy ought to be diſcovered to the world. And therefore our bleſſed Saviour, who came with a deſign to retrieve a true ſpirit of religion among men, finds it expedient to unmaſk thoſe notorious hypocrites, that their deformities being diſcovered, their ways, as well as their perſons, might be the better underſtood and avoided. And when he ſaw, by the mighty opinion they had of themſelves, and their uncharitableneſs towards all others, how little good was to be done upon them, he ſeldom vouchſafes them his preſence; but rather converſes with thoſe, who being more openly wicked, were more eaſily made ſenſible of their errors, and prevailed on to reform. For this end alone it was, that he ſo freely converſed with them, to convince them, that he was willing to ſave even the moſt profligate. And therefore his keeping ſuch notorious ſinners company ſometimes, could no more be a juſt reproach to Jeſus Chriſt, than it is to a phyſician to be familiar with the ſick.

Moreover, the deſign of Chriſt's humble appearance was very agreeable to the infinite wiſdom of God, and the means very ſuitable and effectual for carrying on of that deſign for the reformation of mankind. For what could we imagine more becoming the divine wiſdom, than to contrive a way for the redemption of a ſinful world? Who more fit to be employed upon ſuch an important overture of grace and mercy as this, than the Son of God? And how was it poſſible he ſhould give a greater teſtimony of himſelf,

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and withal of the buſineſs he came about, than he did when he was in the world? His accompliſhment of ſeveral prophecies, and his power of working miracles, ſhewed plainly who he was: the nature of his doctrine, the manner of his life and converſation, and the greatneſs of his ſufferings, demonſtrated what his deſign was in appearing among men; for they were all ſo conducted, as to convince mankind that their God was upon terms of mercy with them, and therefore had ſent his dearly beloved Son into the world, that he might not only obtain a free pardon and remiſſion of ſins for thoſe who repent, but eternal life for all ſuch as obey him. And what can we imagine more great and deſireable than this for God to manifeſt his wiſdom in? We ſee a great diſcovery of it indeed, in the works of nature; and might alſo in the methods of divine providence, if partiality and intereſt did not blind our eyes: but both theſe, though great in themſelves, fall infinitely ſhort of the admirable contrivance of retrieving man, who had revolted from his Maker, and was juſt ſinking into a ſtate of perdition. Though redemption is doubtleſs the nobleſt work of God, yet even this glorious diſplay of unbounded benevolence and love, daring and deſperate men, in the pride and vanity of their own imaginations, have frequently preſumed to hold in deriſion; and at the ſame time have eſtimated themſelves very monuments of wit and wiſdom. The Jews had the wiſdom of their philoſophers, which they ſo paſſionately admired, that whatever did not agree therewith, though infinitely more certain and uſeful, was on that account rejected by them. The Romans, after the conqueſt of ſo great a part of the world, were grown ſuch politicians and ſtateſmen, that few of them could find time to reflect on the concerns of another life, whilſt their thoughts were almoſt wholly employed in the management of this. And ſome of all theſe ſorts do yet remain, and therefore many affect to diſregard this amazing diſcovery of divine wiſdom: and yet upon a ſtrict and impartial enquiry, no religion ever

ever could be found which more fully anſwered the expectation of the Jews, the reaſon of the Greeks, and the wiſdom of the Romans, than that which was made known by Jeſus Chriſt.—Here the JEW might find his long-expected Meſſiah actually come, and all the prophecies fulfilled which related to him.—Here the GREEK might find his long and vainly looked-for certainty of a future ſtate, and the way which leads to it.—Here the ROMAN might ſee a religion ſerviceable to another world, and this together.—Here are precepts more holy, promiſes more certain, and rewards more deſireable than the wit or invention of men could ever have deviſed.—Here are inſtitutions far more pious and uſeful to mankind, than the moſt admired laws of either SOLON, LYCURGUS, or PLATO.—Here are no popular deſigns carried on, no vices indulged for the public good, as we frequently find in theirs.—Here is no making religion a mere ſtate device, and of no other ſervice than to keep the populace in awe; a practice too common with the Romans.—Here is no wrapping up religion in unintelligible hieroglyphics as was cuſtomary among the EGYPTIANS.—Here is no inhumanity, no cruelty in the ſacrifices offered;—no riotous and prophane doings allowed in the moſt ſolemn myſteries;—no worſhipping of ſuch for gods, as were not fit to live, had they been men: all which were practiced daily by the idolatrous HEATHENS. But the nature of our worſhip is ſuch, as the minds of thoſe who come to it ought to be, and as becomes that God whom we profeſs to ſerve, pure and holy, grave and ſerious, ſolemn and devout, without the leaſt mixture of ſuperſtition, vanity or oſtentation. The precepts of our moſt holy religion are plain and eaſy to be known, very ſuitable to the nature of mankind, and highly tending to the advantage of thoſe who practice them, both in this and a better life. The arguments to perſuade men are the moſt weighty and powerful, and of as great importance as the love of God, the death of his Son, the hopes of everlaſting happineſs, and the fears of eternal

nal miſery can be to men.—Wherein therefore is the contrivance of our religion defective, when the end is ſo deſireable, and the means ſo effectual for the obtaining it?

To conclude. Let us with humble hearts and minds contemplate the whole deſign of the GOSPEL, and ſee how admirably well it is adapted to the end for which it was intended, to the condition of thoſe whoſe good alone was aimed at, and to the honour and glory of the great contriver and director of it. And let us not, by the impenitency of our hearts, and obſtinate perſeverance in a vicious courſe of life, diſhonour God and our Saviour, and condemn that religion by our lives, which we magnify by our words. For when we have ſaid all we can, the beſt and moſt effectual vindication of our doctrines muſt ariſe from a ſuitable life and converſation. Complaints of the extreme wickedneſs of men have been made in all ages of the world, and therefore whoever views the many noble charities which throw a luſtre on THESE TIMES, will not chuſe to hear us declaiming on the depravity of the preſent generation.—BENEFICENCE is doubtleſs a noble virtue; but it is not ſafe to reſt here,—we muſt adorn our lives with other virtues alſo, to make us meet inheritors of the promiſed ſalvation. We muſt not omit "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." From the preſent ſtate of religion in this kingdom, we dare not too peremptorily denominate THE MANY to be Chriſtians, unleſs we mean to believe words repugnant to the tenor and courſe of actions. What is become of the purity, the innocence, the candour, the brotherly love, the ſincerity and devotion, ſo conſpicuous among the primitive Chriſtians? Where is a like zeal with theirs for the honour of Chriſt and the Chriſtian Religion? Was it the avowed deſign of moſt men to make the Chriſtian Religion a diſhonour and reproach to the Jews, Mahometans, and Heathens, could they do it more effectually than they have done?

done? Would any one that looks into the preſent ſtate of the Chriſtian domains, ever imagine, that their Religion was ſo infinitely preferable to any other? Is the now Chriſtian Rome, for inſtance, ſo much beyond what it was while in the poſſeſſion of Heathens? Nay, was it not remarkable in thoſe days for juſtice, ſincerity, contempt of riches, and a kind of generous honeſty? And who does not, though of the ſame perſuaſion, if he hath any ingenuity left, lament the low eſtate of all thoſe virtues there at preſent? Will not the ſobriety of the very Turks upbraid our exceſſes; and the obſtinacy of Jews, in defence and practice of their religion, condemn our lukewarmneſs and want of zeal? If we have then any regard for the honour of our religion, or any concern for the welfare of our ſouls, let us not only have the name, but let us lead the lives of Chriſtians; let us make amends for all the reproaches which our communion hath ſuffered by the faction and diſobedience of ſome, by the impieties and profaneneſs of others, and the too great neglect and careleſſneſs of all. In a word, let every action of our lives proclaim that meek and lowly as our Saviour's demeanour was, through the whole courſe of his earthly pilgrimage, yet we act as thoſe who expect his ſecond Advent, when he will aſſume a more glorious appearance and ſummon a trembling world to attend an awful tribunal.

" Do thou then Almighty God give us grace, that we may caſt
" away the works of darkneſs, and put upon us the armour of
" light; now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son
" Jeſus Chriſt came to viſit us in great humility; that in the laſt
" day, when he ſhall come again in his glorious Majeſty, to judge
" both the quick and dead, we may riſe to the life immortal,
" through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy
" Ghoſt, now and ever. Amen."

SERMON

SERMON XI.

For the BIRTH-DAY of CHRIST, commonly called CHRISTMAS-DAY.

The ſober Uſe of Feſtivals.

LUKE II. 30, 31, 32.

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THY SALVATION: WHICH THOU HAST PREPARED BEFORE THE FACE OF ALL PEOPLE: A LIGHT TO LIGHTEN THE GENTILES, AND THE GLORY OF THY PEOPLE ISRAEL.

THIS grand feſtival was inſtituted for our moſt ſolemn commemoration of the greateſt miracle ever wrought for the good of mankind; namely, the redemption of the world, by the incarnation of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. "For without controverſy great is the myſtery of godlineſs: God "was manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the ſpirit, ſeen of angels, "preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and re-"ceived up into glory." And now at this very time, notwithſtanding this amazing condeſcenſion in the Almighty, in ſending his only begotten Son into the world; "A light to lighten the "Gentiles, and the glory of his people Iſrael;" notwithſtanding ſo

ineſtimable a benefit prepared by our heavenly Father "before the "face of all people," ought never to be forgotten; yet how few, alas! are there, that attend the ſervice of the Church on this great and ſolemn day, comparatively ſpeaking, to thoſe who make the whole ſeaſon, if they obſerve it at all, a kind of carnival, or one uninterrupted ſeries of ſinful extravagance. On which account rigid perſons have wiſhed this feſtival in particular to be aboliſhed, alledging that it is annually the occaſion of much wickedneſs, diſorder and confuſion. The time has been when this very anniverſary was, by order of thoſe that then aſſumed the reins of government, obſerved as a faſt; the time has been, when our churches on this day, were by authority cloſe ſhut up, and our ſhops not only allowed, but commanded to be open; when our cuſtomary proviſions for this day of joy and rejoicing were publicly prohibited, as being unhallowed and prophane. What precedent,—however the reformers at that time of day could find for ſuch a prohibition, we are at a loſs to determine; for allowing the charge of irregularity and profuſion to be well ſupported, yet certainly the abuſe of ſerious inſtitutions will not afford ſufficient warrant for ſetting them aſide. If this be admitted, it may not be improper, before we enter upon a recital of the glorious circumſtances that attended the birth of our bleſſed Lord, to recommend the ſober uſe of feſtivals in general; and this of the Nativity in particular.

The Jewiſh feſtivals, ſuch as that of the PASSOVER, the PENTECOST, and that likewiſe of the TABERNACLES, had, as is evident from various texts of ſcripture, been moſt ſhamefully abuſed; they had been to ſome the occaſion of much offence. But were any of theſe ſolemnities aboliſhed on account of ſuch exceſſes? Was the obſervance of any one of them at any time forbidden? aſſuredly no: for as they were of divine inſtitution, they could not be ſuperſeded by human authority. And we find, that notwithſtanding there was ſo much levity and luxury; ſo much riot and revelry;

revelry; and ſo little piety in the obſervance of thoſe Jewiſh feſtivals, God Almighty did not think fit to preclude thoſe ſhameful diſorders, by an abſolute aboliſhment of ſuch rites and ceremonies, but inſtead thereof was pleaſed to warn the then people not to incur his diſpleaſure by a wilful prophanation of his religious inſtitutions, and gave his prophets commiſſion accordingly, to denounce his woes againſt ſuch as in contempt of his threatnings, would ſtill preſume to prophane his ſabbaths. Such indeed is the frailty of mankind, that though peradventure they are not altogether inſenſible of the bleſſings which the ſovereign diſpenſer of all good things is continually ſhowering down upon them, yet if particular times and ſeaſons were not ſet apart for the purpoſe of public thankſgiving, they would ſoon loſe all traces of his loving kindneſs towards them. For theſe reaſons we may preſume, or for others of the like nature, our ever gracious and almighty Benefactor permitted the continuation of the Jewiſh feſtivals, notwithſtanding their frequent and daring prophanations. We therefore can ſee no reaſon why thoſe who are at the helm of the Chriſtian church may not, under the like circumſtances, very juſtifiably follow the pattern which God, in his infinite wiſdom, has been thus graciouſly pleaſed to ſet before them; for though it cannot be pretended that any of our feſtivals, or even this of the Nativity, which is one of the moſt ſolemn of them all, was inſtituted and ſet apart by the immediate direction and appointment of the Almighty; yet we may boldly venture to aſſert, that the benefit and bleſſing which we this day commemorate, namely, the redemption of the world, by the manifeſtation of that light which was prepared before the face of all people, was a concern of infinitely greater importance than the deliverance of the Iſraelites from their Egyptian bondage; than the total deſtruction of Pharaoh and his hoſt in the red ſea; or the miraculous preſervation of the Jews in the wilderneſs for forty years ſucceſſively; ſo that if thoſe national deliverances deſerved to

be kept in perpetual remembrance by annual feſtivities; then this of the Nativity or Birth day of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt muſt ſurely demand a higher degree of wonder and worſhip. Great reaſon was there then that our church ſhould order and appoint one day at leaſt, if not more, for the commemoration of ſo boundleſs a bleſſing, whereon her truly devout members ſhould aſſemble and meet together, in the moſt ſolemn and grateful manner, ſing praiſes to God for this his ineſtimable benefit conferred on all mankind; and in order to furniſh them with proper matter for their moſt ſerious meditations, ſhe not only directs particular prayers to be uſed, and appoints apt portions of ſcripture to be publicly read, but ſermons likewiſe to be preached, adapted to the ſolemn occaſion: and in order to their being better diſpoſed for ſo holy an exerciſe, and leſs encumbered with worldly affairs, ſhe diſcharges them for a ſhort time, from their uſual avocations, and permits, though ſhe does not attempt to enjoin, a more free and plentiful uſe of the good things of this life, than moſt men's circumſtances could furniſh them with at all ſeaſons of the year. Aſſuredly the abrogation of the day would not prevent the impieties that are ſometimes acted upon it; it would only poſtpone them to another day; and then thoſe who are religiouſly diſpoſed would be deprived of an excellent help to their devotions, and that great myſtery of godlineſs would, we have reaſon to fear, be but ſeldom reflected upon as it ought, and in proceſs of time the commemoration of it would perhaps be too totally forgot. What we have here offered therefore will, we preſume, be thought ſufficient not only to vindicate the wiſdom and piety of our church, in this particular; but alſo to recommend THE SOBER USE OF FESTIVALS.

For what remains, we ſhall call for your attention to a brief recital of thoſe wonderful circumſtances that attended the incarnation of the Lamb of God when he became "A light to lighten the "Gentiles, prepared before the face of all people." We have not any

any where elſe ſo particular an account of this great tranſaction as in this chapter before us, by that holy evangeliſt St. Luke. His goſpel is wrote in a familiar and unaffected ſtyle; the ſenſe in moſt places, to be ſure, in every place of conſiderable importance, is eaſily perceived, and calls for no long explications, or elaborate comments to unfold it. We, of the reformed churches, have the opportunity of conſulting theſe ſacred records in our own language; tranſlated with all fidelity and plainneſs, which conveys this light to us immediately, ſo that we may exclaim with SIMEON, that juſt and devout man, who being full of the Holy Ghoſt and waiting for the conſolation of Iſrael, expreſſed his thankfulneſs in the ſhort but admirable hymn we have choſen for our text. "Lord, now let-
"teſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, according to thy word.
"For mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation, which thou haſt prepared
"before the face of all people: A light to lighten the Gentiles,
"and the glory of thy people Iſrael."

The manifeſtation of this light to the Gentiles, intimates beyond diſpute, that they were to be partakers of the advantages that redounded from it; it ſhews that light was come, and that it was come to them. As to the circumſtances of the manifeſtation, we are informed, by our holy evangeliſt, that an angel from heaven, was commiſſioned to give notice of his birth. "And there were
"in the ſame country, ſhepherds abiding in the field keeping
"watch over their flock by night. And lo the angel of the Lord
"came upon them, and the glory of the Lord ſhone round
"about them; and they were ſore afraid." But the angel, whoſe buſineſs was not to ſpread terror and diſmay, but to ſpeak joy and comfort, "ſaid unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good
"tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people. For unto you
"is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt
"the Lord." It was ſtill a more glorious circumſtance, that the powers of heaven began to celebrate the praiſes of our bleſſed Saviour,

viour, juſt at the time when he was born. "And ſuddenly there "was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, praiſing "God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth "peace, good will towards men."

The moſt intereſting token to us, who heretofore were darkneſs, but on whom this light has now moſt graciouſly ſhined, is recorded by St. Matthew in the following words: "Now when Jeſus was "born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, be-"hold, there came wiſe men, from the Eaſt to Jeruſalem, ſaying, "where is he that is born king of the Jews; for we have ſeen his "ſtar in the Eaſt, and are come to worſhip him." Beyond all queſtion, this ſtar was miraculous, and commiſſioned by the Almighty to proclaim the birth of his ſon. He was born in Judea, but as he was to be the Saviour, not of Judea alone, but of all the inhabitants of the earth, of thoſe who had lived hitherto in darkneſs, ſo nothing ſeems more ſuitable to the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God, than that this light ſhould ſhoot forth its glorious rays, and the knowledge of it extend to the remoteſt regions of the globe. And this knowledge was conveyed by the moſt ſtupendous and wonderful event that ever hiſtory recorded. For that perſons of figure, and reputation for their extraordinary ſkill, ſhould be induced to leave their native ſoil, to explore a remote and unknown country, and that they ſhould rely intirely upon the conduct and motions of this bright luminary; that the ſtar ſhould be ſo punctual and exact in its motion; and when it had done its errand, ſtand ſtill or diſappear; theſe accumulated circumſtances argue that the wiſe men had ſome ſecret admonition from above; that the ſtar was diſpatched upon the moſt important meſſage; and guided by the moſt unerring wiſdom.

It is very obſervable that theſe wiſe men, when they came to Jeruſalem, did not reſort to the Jewiſh doctors to inquire about the meaning of the ſtar, and what it prognoſticated; nor did they expoſtulate

poſtulate among themſelves of the folly of being guided by ſuch an uncommon conductor; but notwithſtanding the many diſcouragements they had met with, and the dangers they might experience from the jealouſy of the ruling powers, they boldly demanded, "Where is he that was born king of the Jews? for we have ſeen "his ſtar in the Eaſt, and are come to worſhip him." His ſtar, that is, the ſtar which God appointed to give us notice of his coming. From this radiant luminary they were aſſured, the king of the Jews, the Meſſiah, was really born; and did not in the leaſt ſuſpect the truth of ſo intereſting an event. Their only buſineſs was to know the place where. But what reaſon had the Gentiles to inquire after the king of the Jews? what concern had they with him? They had ſeen his ſtar, and therefore they came a long journey on purpoſe to worſhip him, and rejoiced with exceeding great joy, when they found the ſtar ſtanding over where the young child was. By this means, they were informed of the place; "and "when they were come into the houſe, they ſaw the young child, "with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worſhipped him." Nay more, for as a teſtimony of the ſincerity of their veneration, they "opened their treaſures, they preſented unto him gifts, gold, "and frankincenſe, and myrrh." What an aſtoniſhing diſpenſation was this! That the Gentiles ſhould thus adore THE CHRIST, whilſt the Jews are wholly bent on deſtroying him;—that the one ſhould welcome him with ſuch fervent affection, and the other treat him with ſuch ſcorn and contempt. Could this have happened unleſs the Gentiles had been ſatisfied that he was born to enlighten their minds and be their Saviour; unleſs the Jews, through an unaccountable prejudice and obſtinacy, diſbelieved that he was to do the ſame for them? Their being warned of God in a dream that they ſhould not return to Herod, proves that the Almighty was immediately concerned in this manifeſtation; and favours

vours extremely the ſuppoſition that they had ſome notices from heaven before they undertook their journey.

Ere we proceed to the practical improvements that may be made on theſe paſſages in ſacred hiſtory, let us take a ſhort review of this tranſaction, in ſomewhat a different light from the foregoing part of our diſcourſe. Theſe wiſe men were probably ſome of the Perſian or Chaldean magi who were, as hiſtorians repreſent them, perſons of the firſt rank in thoſe Eaſtern countries; in greateſt reputation for wiſdom and learning, and particularly well ſkilled in aſtronomy. The reaſon of their coming to Jeruſalem at this time, was the appearance of a meteor plainly diſtinguiſhed from the ordinary ſtars of heaven in its light, motion and ſituation; and we may well imagine it to reſemble that pillar of fire which led the children of Iſrael in their paſſage from Egypt to Canaan; only with this difference, that it ſhone out by day as well as by night. But like the other it accommodated its motion to the travellers convenience; ſtanding ſtill when they reſted to refreſh themſelves; and going forward when they proceeded on their journey, and at laſt pointing out the place where our Lord lay, by hovering over it. Now the queſtion is, how theſe men could gueſs at the birth of our Lord from the appearance of ſuch a luminary? It is very likely they were governed by that general expectation the Jews had of their Meſſiah's coming in that age. Though beſides this, we need not doubt but that Being who afterwards appeared to them in a dream to warn them againſt returning to Herod, did at this time ſignify to them in ſome ſuch divine way, that the long-expected king of the Jews was now born. The ſame almighty Providence which gave them an extraordinary ſign, would not ſuffer them to miſtake its deſtination. After a journey of ſix or ſeven days, as it is commonly computed, they arrive in Jeruſalem, and openly inquire for him who was born king of the Jews. The rumour hereof quickly reached the ears of Herod, a cruel and ambitious prince, and conſequently a timorous and jealous tyrant.

In

In great conſternation he ſummons a council of the chief prieſts and ſcribes, and demands of them where their prophets had aſſigned the birth-place of their Meſſiah? Underſtanding that it was at Bethlehem, he reſolved to take this opportunity of finding him out and deſtroying him. He calls for the travellers, and aſks them ſeveral queſtions, particularly how long it was ſince they firſt diſcovered the ſtar, that ſo he might gueſs at the child's age? He then diſmiſſes them with great appearance of candour and benevolence; injoining them, when they had found the child, to bring him word where he was, that he likewiſe might go and pay his tribute of adoration. The providence of God is herein very obſervable, that a perſon of Herod's ſubtlety and addreſs ſhould diſmiſs the wiſe men without ſending ſome of his own ſervants along with them, to ſeize upon his rival. Perhaps he thought it beſt to get him into his own hands without violence, leſt he ſhould alarm not only his parents, but all the Jews, who at this time ſeemed to attend but little to theſe matters, and therefore were not to be put upon a further examination. In ſhort, this ſecreſy might ſeem ſafeſt to him, though in the end it defeated his deſign.

The wiſe men, by the direction of the ſtar, having found our Lord at Bethlehem, according to the cuſtom of the oriental people, who never approach their princes without a preſent, offered him the moſt valuable productions of their country, and the quality of their gifts had a particular ſignificancy, as ſome obſerve, to deſcribe the object of their adoration: for they offered MYRRH as to a man that was to be delivered to death and the grave for our ſalvation. GOLD, as to a king whoſe throne was to be everlaſting. INCENSE, as to a God who was found of them that ſought him not.—Having performed the buſineſs of their journey, and purpoſing to return again by Jeruſalem, and acquaint Herod where he might find the bleſſed infant, God, who knew the heart of that

accurſed tyrant, prevented them by a viſion at night, and directed them into their own country another way.

This portion of ſacred hiſtory will afford us much uſeful matter for our ſerious meditation, but principally we may learn from hence, that all people and nations, are equally capable of receiving advantage from the incarnation and birth of our bleſſed Saviour. That light which he brought along with him was deſigned to enlighten the whole world, none of the moſt barbarous and ſavage heathens were to be excluded. We were once Gentiles, and as ſuch involved in the ſame obſcurity with the reſt of mankind. But now we are delivered from that unhappy bondage, and ſet free from the dominion of death and gloomy darkneſs. Now the prediction of good old Simeon, recorded in our text, is amply fulfilled—that this child ſhould be a light to lighten the Gentiles; now we are able to witneſs the truth of it, having for our guide the holy ſcriptures, which, inſpired by the wiſdom from above, plainly teach us the happy conſequences of a good and virtuous life, and ſet before us the miſerable portion of thoſe that preſume to act wickedly; wherefore it is our duty to praiſe and magnify the mercies of God towards us. Is it not ſurpriſing then to ſee how little value we generally ſet upon ſpiritual bleſſings; how we ſlight and diſeſteem them? The reaſon is, becauſe we do not ſufficiently reflect of how great importance they are to us. Would we but ſeriouſly conſider that the light we receive is that by which we are directed to eternal glory; by which we are to avoid endleſs miſery; this certainly would excite our praiſes, and make us not only ſenſible of the obligations that are thus graciouſly extended towards us, but unfeignedly thankful for ſo rich and ineſtimable a mercy; truly ſolicitous to approve ourſelves in ſome degree worthy ſuch unlimited compaſſion.

To conclude. As we this day commemorate the nativity of our bleſſed Saviour, who was manifeſted in the fleſh, for the glorious

purpoſe

purpoſe of deſtroying the works of darkneſs; can any thing be more abſurd, than our ſpending the time of this holy feſtival in the practice of thoſe very works which he came purpoſely to deſtroy? And as the bleſſing for which we this day offer up our thanks and praiſe, or at leaſt pretend ſo to do, is no leſs than our redemption from the ſlavery of ſin and Satan, can any thing be more inconſiſtent with, or oppoſite to ſuch pretence, than at this very time to ſell ourſelves again to that bondage from which we ſeem to rejoice that we are ſo happily releaſed? Can any thing therefore be more unſuitable than to abound in iniquity, at this ſeaſon rather than any other? and to be lukewarm in our affections towards God, at a time when they ought to glow with the moſt fervent heat? Can any thing be more abſurd, than that at the very time of our commemorating the birth of our Lord, we ſhould forget, or ſo little conſider the aim and deſign of his coming, as to live and act in direct oppoſition to it, by making this holy feſtival a plea for the indulgence of ourſelves in ſuch irregularities, and ſuch a licentious courſe, as at other times leſs holy, we ſhould be perfectly aſhamed of. That this is the manner, indeed, in which too many keep this feſtival, is a truth not to be denied, though doubtleſs to be lamented by all ſerious and devout Chriſtians. However, I hope better things of all here preſent, and things that accompany ſalvation. I hope all here preſent do, and I pray God that we all may ſo regard this holy feſtival, and ſo reflect upon the principal deſign of our Saviour's coming into the world, as to commemorate his nativity in ſuch a ſober and ſerious manner, as is agreeable to the ſolemn occaſion of it; and furthermore to order our lives in conformity thereunto, that ſo, when he ſhall come to judge the world at the laſt day, we may be found acceptable in his ſight, through the ſame, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all honour and glory, dominion and power, adoration and praiſe, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XII.

For the SUNDAY after CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Jeſus Chriſt the Saviour.

MATTHEW I. 21.

THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS: FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.

WHEN God Almighty firſt created man, he breathed into him the breath of life, placed him in a very happy condition, and gave him power to chooſe the good, and reject the evil. He entered likewiſe into a covenant with him, and promiſed a continuance of his happineſs, and aſſured him of his favour and protection provided he would keep his law;—but if he ſwerved from his obedience, all manner of miſery was denounced againſt him and his poſterity. Our firſt parents however, notwithſtanding theſe gracious promiſes, departed from their innocence, and by that great tranſgreſſion rendered themſelves and their deſcendants the objects of God's wrath, and inheritors of everlaſting puniſhment. In this forlorn and loſt condition mankind was to all appearance plunged, not only into miſery, but miſery everlaſting: no created being either in heaven or earth could aid or aſſiſt them. It was impoſſible that the blood even of hecatombs, of bulls, or

goats

goats ſhould waſh away ſo indelible a ſtain. Mankind in general being thus contaminated, none of their race could be deemed a competent ſacrifice. Nay, was one of the higheſt order of angels to have become incarnate; had ſuch a dignified being ſuffered the penalty of man's ſhameful fall; yet this would have been a ſacrifice by no means adequate to the offence. Becauſe the FIRST COVENANT was broken, and the great and infinite God was thereby inſulted; and ſo juſt and tremendous a being muſt have ſatisfaction in ſome ſort infinite, or elſe the oblation would be unworthy his acceptance.

In this unhappy ſituation whilſt death maintained his mercileſs tyranny over this defolated globe, man muſt have remained the object of the wrath of his almighty creator; have been doomed to perpetual baniſhment, and for ever have loſt the hope of regaining that bliſsful ſeat from which he fell, had not the eternal ſon of God, from his manſion in the higheſt heavens, looked down with an eye of the tendereſt compaſſion upon this valley of miſery. He ſaw the affliction of his people, and was ſo affected with the direful object, that the immenſity of his love even yearned towards us; and from that very inſtant our ſin and ſorrow commenced, our gracious God applied his heart to thoughts of peace, benevolence, and redemption! Then did he lay that ſtupendous plan which angels and glorified ſpirits behold with wonder and veneration. Then did the ſon of God, of the ſame ſubſtance and eternity with God the father, and God the Holy Ghoſt, dwelling in light inacceſſible, and upholding all things by the word of his power, ſubmit to be confined in the priſon of a mortal body; to become a wanderer on this wretched earth, and to ſtoop from the height of majeſty, not only to taſte, but to drink up the very dregs of our bitter cup; that the depth of his miſery might exalt us to glory and immortality!

What an engaging, what a marvellous condeſcenſion was this! That the God of infinite glory ſhould be pleaſed to put on the form

of

of a ſervant; and to ſtoop to the condition of the meaneſt of his own ſlaves! That at the drawing of his firſt breath, he that was poſſeſſed of all things, ſhould vouchſafe to labour under the inconveniences of poverty and contempt! Had the bleſſed Jeſus made his entrance into this world with all the pomp and ſtate of the moſt powerful prince, ſuch a condeſcenſion had been a matter of aſtoniſhment; but his humility was ſo great that the ſacred ſcriptures acquaint us, that when the Lord of life was born, there was no room for him, even in an inn; no bed or cradle of ſtate to receive this infant king, and repoſe his tender body, but a manger and a ſtable. Obſerve this, you that are reduced to homely cottages; or have been brought up in all the exigencies of a narrow fortune; take comfort even from your want, when you behold your God ſubmitting to hardſhips, which are ſo apt to provoke your murmurs and diſcontent; behold your Saviour determining to be made like one of you; taking a part in all your poverty; and preferring hard and coarſe fare to the pomps and delicacies of a palace, or the conveniences of thoſe who live in luxury and eaſe. Let the rich, who value themſelves upon ſumptuous dwellings, learn what eſtimate they ought to make of carved roofs and gawdy manſions, when they behold the king of kings deſpiſing theſe vanities and chooſing to grace the mattraſſes of the poor by making ſuch his lodgment. How can we with haughty diſdain abhor the meaneſt proviſion that providence can beſtow on us, when he who had all things in his power, preferred ſtraw in common with the beaſts, before beds of down or velvet? After this,—as nothing we can ſtoop to deſerves to be called a condeſcenſion; ſo the higheſt condition of life we can aſpire after cannot deſerve the name of greatneſs. In this point of view, —how meek and lowly muſt our Saviour's deportment appear?— But at the ſame time how amiable and lovely! Can we then ſufficiently admire the extenſiveneſs of our bleſſed Redeemer's affection, who thus debaſed himſelf for us, who are utterly incapable of adding

ding ought to his felicity? Verily, had he not taken compaſſion on our loſt ſtate and condition we ſhould have been ſunk into the moſt conſummate miſery and deepeſt deſtruction. Let the holy angels in robes of light and innocence wonder and behold what manner of love this is wherewith our bleſſed Redeemer hath loved us that we ſhould be called the ſons of God.

People of all perſuaſions are willing to celebrate the anniverſary of any remarkable deliverance with religious worſhip as well as with ſecular feaſting. Surely then ſo gracious a diſplay of infinite goodneſs, as the Advent of the Meſſiah into the world ſhould be commemorated by us with the utmoſt gratitude; with chearfulneſs and devotion; with diſtinguiſhed benevolence towards our neighbours; and with chriſtian love and unanimity. We ſhall make it therefore our buſineſs at preſent to aſſiſt or rather to animate a due and profitable remembrance of our bleſſed Saviour's nativity. In order to which we ſhall ſhew the infinite obligations which we lie under to him, inaſmuch as he came into the world to call offenders to repentance, and to ſave them from their ſins.

" Now the birth of Jeſus Chriſt was on this wiſe: when as his " mother Mary was eſpouſed to Joſeph, before they came together, " ſhe was found with child of the Holy Ghoſt. Then Joſeph her " huſband being a juſt man, and not willing to make her a pub- " lic example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he " thought on theſe things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared " unto him in a dream, ſaying, Joſeph thou ſon of David, fear not " to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived " in her is of the Holy Ghoſt. And ſhe ſhall bring forth a ſon, " and thou ſhalt call his name JESUS: for he ſhall ſave his people " from their ſins."

In diſcourſing on this myſtery of godlineſs we ſhall produce proof, and we truſt competent proof, that THE SAVIOUR of the world is actually come; and that this JESUS, the ſon of Mary, and reputed

reputed ſon of Joſeph is that very prophet the lamb of God, the great Redeemer of univerſal mankind.

Jeſus the ſon of Mary, was born at that critical period when the Jews acknowledged Herod for their king; and notwithſtanding many about that time pretended to be the Meſſiah, yet their lives and doctrines, nay their very names have not been tranſmitted to poſterity: whereas our bleſſed Saviour's precepts have made their way through the whole world notwithſtanding the ſtrongeſt oppoſition: ſo prevailing is truth! "How beautiful upon the mountains "are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publiſheth "peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publiſheth ſalva-"tion!" Now it is evident, from the hiſtories of thoſe days, that the Jews themſelves expected the coming of the Meſſiah at that very juncture in which the bleſſed Jeſus made his publick appearance in the world: hence it was that they doubted of John the baptiſt, whether he were the Chriſt or not. And it is confidently aſſerted by many commentators, that the Jews believe to this day that the Meſſiah did come about the time Jeſus was born, but that he is concealed from them by reaſon of their tranſgreſſions.

The prophet Micah plainly foretold the place in which Jeſus ſhould be born: "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be "little among the thouſands of Judah; yet out of thee ſhall he "come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Iſrael; whoſe goings "forth have been from old, from everlaſting." It was this paſſage of ſcripture which the ſanhedrim interpreted to Herod. This was the birth place of the bleſſed Jeſus as we are told by St. Matthew. "Now Jeſus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod "the king."

Another circumſtance of our Saviour's birth according to the prophecies was;—that he ſhould be born of the houſe and lineage of David; of him therefore is that promiſe made to David, to be underſtood:—"Thy ſeed will I eſtabliſh for ever, and build

" up thy throne to all generations." When therefore Jeſus enquired of the phariſees whoſe ſon they expected the Meſſiah ſhould be, they readily anſwered him,—the ſon of David. Now we find the pedigree of Joſeph traced up to David both by St. Matthew and St. Luke; and it was a ſtated rule obſerved among the Jews to marry one of their own tribe, and the family of their fathers.

It was further however to be obſerved, that the perſon of whom the Meſſiah was to be born, ſhould be a virgin. " Behold! a vir-
" gin ſhall conceive, and bear a ſon, and ſhall call his name Imma-
" nuel" ſaith the prophet Iſaiah.—And Jeſus was indeed born of a virgin. His mother was a virgin when eſpouſed to Joſeph. " And
" in the ſixth month, the angel Gabriel was ſent from God unto a
" city of Galilee, named Nazareth; to a virgin, eſpouſed to a man,
" whoſe name was Joſeph." She was a virgin when ſhe conceived him. " Now the birth of Jeſus Chriſt was on this wiſe; when as
" his mother Mary was eſpouſed to Joſeph, before they came to-
" gether, ſhe was found with child by the Holy Ghoſt."—As therefore the prophets foretold, that the bleſſed Jeſus ſhould be born of a virgin, and the goſpel affirmeth Mary his mother to have been ſo, theſe paſſages ſtrongly elucidate each other. It cannot be denied, however, but that certain of the modern Jewiſh writers have ventured to aſſert that the wife of Joſeph was taken in adultery; the weakneſs of which accuſation will ſufficiently appear, if we conſider that, notwithſtanding the ſecretaries and governors were ſo inveterate againſt the bleſſed Jeſus and his doctrine, they never attempted to call in queſtion the chaſtity of his mother, though their laws are ſo expreſs and inexorable againſt that crime. Why did they not accuſe her, and by that means deſtroy the reputation of her ſon? Or rather, why did they not ſay, he was the ſon of Joſeph?—But probably they feared that the reputation of our bleſſed Redeemer would have been eſtabliſhed by ſuch a ſcrutiny;—for Joſeph both knew and aſſerted the contrary; and ſince Joſeph diſclaimed him

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for his ſon, they would certainly have prevailed againſt her, as their malice was ever awake,—if ſundry circumſtances and the ſtrongeſt evidences had not been produced, and the miraculous conception of our Lord had not been proved beyond all doubt and cenſure. What greater evidence can be reaſonably deſired of the truth of this myſtery of our religion, than that notwithſtanding we find ſo many judges, ſo many ſcribes and phariſees enraged againſt a weak woman; yet none of them ſtood forth to accuſe her; for ſhe lived unqueſtioned not only in her ſon's life time, but even after his crucifixion? "The teſtimony of Theodoſius a Jew, in his conference "with a chriſtian merchant named Philip, in the time of the Em- "peror Juſtinian, is right worthy to be noted in this behalf. In the "temple at Jeruſalem, ſaith that Jew, there were two and twenty "prieſts in ordinary, and when any of them died, the ſurvivors choſe "another in place of the deceaſed. Jeſus being a perſon very re- "markable for his virtuous life and doctrine, was elected by a great "majority of voices, and according to their cuſtom they ſent for "his father and mother previous to his being regiſtered. Joſeph "being dead, Mary came thither alone, who being aſked the name "of the father of Jeſus, declared upon her oath that ſhe had "conceived him of the Holy Ghoſt, and related to them the pro- "phecy of the angel. Further to confirm what ſhe had declared, "ſhe told them the names of thoſe who came unlooked for to her "labour. Upon ſtrict enquiry into the truth of ſo extraordinary "an affair, they found all things to correſpond exactly with what "had been affirmed by the holy matron. His name was entered "accordingly in the regiſter of the prieſts in theſe words—JESUS "THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD AND OF THE VIRGIN MARY. "And this regiſter was ſaved at the ſacking of Jeruſalem and kept "in the city of Tiberias. This regiſter, continues Theodoſius, as "one of the chief among the Jews, and as one from whom in reſpect "of my dignity nothing was reſtrained, I have ſeen and peruſed.

"Why then, queſtioned the merchant, did you not from ſuch con-
" viction become a proſelyte to chriſtianity?—To this Theodoſius
" replied: it is not ignorance that holdeth me in the Jewiſh com-
" munion but the honours which I have obtained among my coun-
" trymen, the like whereof I could not expect elſewhere."—How hardly ſhall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!—The following circumſtance gives this little anecdote the greater appearance of truth, namely, that we find Jeſus frequently ſpeaking in the ſynagogues and preaching from their pulpits to the people; which, had he no right or authority to ſit in Moſes ſeat, in all probability the pride of the phariſees would ſoon have put a ſtop to his proceedings. From all which circumſtances it is clearly evident, that Chriſt is come, and that Jeſus the ſon of Mary is THE CHRIST.

It is no leſs clearly and explicitly revealed, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave his people from their ſins.—" And ſhe ſhall
" bring forth a ſon, and thou ſhalt call his name Jeſus: for he ſhall
" ſave his people from their ſins. Neither is there ſalvation in any
" other: for there is none other name under heaven given among
" men whereby we muſt be ſaved." It was the received opinion of the Jews, that the Meſſiah was to be a temporal prince; that he ſhould gather them together from among the heathen; that he ſhould raiſe them to a ſurpriſing degree of glory and power; ſhould make them the terror of the whole world, and bring all nations under ſubjection to them: but becauſe the bleſſed Jeſus acted quite the reverſe from their ſelfiſh views; they rejected, ſcorned, contemned, reviled, and at laſt carried their malice to ſuch an incredible height of preſumption, that they put him, who came to redeem them from miſery, and from the power of ſin and ſatan, to a moſt painful and ignominious death, even the death of the croſs. It will not therefore be improper in this place to ſhew that the Meſſiah was not to be a temporal prince, as they vainly imagined, but ſuch a Saviour as our text deſcribes.

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That the Meſſiah was to come into the world to ſave his people from their ſins is the conſtant doctrine of the prophets concerning him. He was to deliver men from the guilt of their tranſgreſſions, and alſo from their obligation to puniſhment, and from the pollution and power of ſin upon their nature; he was to die as an atonement for the offences of mankind, and to reſtore them, upon a hearty repentance to the favour of God, and to everlaſting happineſs. And thus much is plainly ſaid in the prophecy of the prophet Daniel concerning him: "And the Meſſiah ſhall be cut off "but not for himſelf."—How clearly does this foretell the ſacrifice of his death, and the atonement he ſhould therein make for ſins that were none of his! It is ſaid in another place,—"The chaſtiſe-"ment of our peace was upon him; and with his ſtripes we "are healed."—Now as theſe things were propheſied of the Meſſiah ſo are they truly applicable to Jeſus Chriſt. When Philip interpreted the ſcriptures to the eunuch, he believed and confeſſed that Jeſus was Chriſt and the ſon of God. It is likewiſe ſaid by St. John, that the Son of God came to deſtroy the works of Satan and to cleanſe and ſanctify our natures, which that wicked one had polluted; and by St. Paul that he "gave himſelf for us, that he might "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar "people, zealous of good works."

Theſe paſſages ſufficiently make it appear that it is the doctrine both of the Old and New Teſtament, and therefore not to be diſputed by any ſerious believer in thoſe ſacred records, that Jeſus came into the world to ſave mankind.—Ought we not therefore to receive ſo gracious a diſpenſation with the utmoſt gratitude?—Whenever we think of this, it ſhould excite our devout adoration and praiſe. During the courſe of our celebration of this moſt ſolemn feſtival, we ſhould devote much time to meditation on this great inſtance of divine love, to affect our hearts with it, and to diſpoſe ourſelves to make ſuch returns of thankfulneſs, as may be in

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ſome meaſure ſuitable to ſo great a benefit; for our bleſſed Saviour not only died to ſave us from eternal deſtruction, but out of his infinite compaſſion to his degenerate creatures, hath preſcribed ſuch methods, given ſuch examples and encouragements; that nothing can be thought fit and likely to promote the ſalvation of mankind, but what his goodneſs and his wiſdom have moſt abundantly ſupplied us with; he hath taken ſuch effectual care of our happineſs, that we have nothing left, but the mere power of being miſerable. If therefore men will chooſe to be wretched; if the ſtrongeſt arguments will not prevail; if neither the moſt glorious promiſes, nor yet the ſevereſt threatenings; if neither intereſt, ſelf-love, nor the proſpect of a happy immortality, will at all move us in a matter of the higheſt importance, we muſt periſh; nay moſt deſervedly and irrecoverably periſh. If after all that God or Chriſt hath done for us, we will obſtinately and perverſely die, we cannot in juſtice charge heaven with our perdition, but muſt own it to be the natural effect of our wilful and incurable folly, and baſe contempt of ſuch infinite love, and ſuch undeſerved indulgence towards us.

To conclude, ſince the Lord hath ſo abundantly provided for our happineſs; ſince his only begotten ſon ſuffered ſo much for us; ſince it is our advantage only that is deſigned; ſince God cannot poſſibly reap any benefit even from the ſalvation of all mankind; for he was, is, and ever will be infinitely happy in himſelf; ſhall we therefore defeat all theſe deſigns of grace and goodneſs towards us, by our invincible reſolution to ruin and undo ourſelves? Did the only begotten ſon of God, as at this time, deſcend from the regions of bliſs; was he born into this miſerable world, and did he humble himſelf to take our fleſh, that by ſuch ſubmiſſion he might make us capable of dwelling in the higheſt heavens; and all this out of mere pity and compaſſion to our deſperate condition; and ſhall we think the denying ourſelves a ſhort-lived pleaſure too much for obtaining ſo great ſalvation? Shall any of us be unwilling

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to lead a ſober, temperate, and honeſt life, when our bleſſed Saviour endured a mean, low, contemptible one, and ſuffered an ignominious death for no other purpoſe that to procure for us eternal happineſs.

Think then all ye that give the reins to your unruly appetites and affections, what a grief and anxiety it will one day create in your minds; what horror and deſpair it will fill your guilty ſouls with; when ye ſhall reflect upon the infinite love and kindneſs of God, and how deſirous he was that all men ſhould be ſaved; when ye ſhall conſider that wonderful pity and compaſſion of your Saviour in being born and dying for you, and procuring for you ſuch eaſy terms of ſalvation; and ſo often by his ſpirit moving and exciting you to your duty: when ye ſhall ſeriouſly reflect on the many obligations he hath laid upon you, and the wiſe methods he hath uſed for your recovery and amendment; and how that nothing was wanting on God's part but that ye might now have been adoring his wiſdom and goodneſs in happy regions of undiſturbed peace and joy; and yet through your own ſhameful neglect are now forced in vain to ſeek a moment's relief from your agonizing pains. Will not theſe conſiderations heighten, if poſſible, the eternal and inexpreſſible torments of hell? The fierceſt vengeance, the ſevereſt puniſhments are doubtleſs reſerved for thoſe who wilfully neglect ſo great ſalvation; who knowing and hearing the comfortable tidings of the goſpel, deſpiſe the proffered bleſſings; whom neither the kindneſs nor condeſcenſion, the wounds nor ſufferings of the ſon of God could perſuade; nor yet the excellency, eaſe and profitableneſs of his commands invite; nor the promiſes of unutterable joys allure; nor the threatnings of eternal puniſhment engage to accept everlaſting happineſs and glory. Thoſe who deſpiſe the great ſalvation purchaſed by the eternal ſon of God, have no great cauſe to celebrate theſe feſtal days; nay happy it had been for them, notwithſtanding all that Chriſt hath done to ſave a miſerable and ruined world, if the bleſſed Jeſus had never been born. Let us then my brethren,

brethren, employ the preſent ſeaſon in returns of humble praiſes for ſo valuable a bleſſing; let us join our voices, as well as we are able, with the heavenly hoſt that attended and celebrated Chriſt's nativity; when the heavens proclaimed his birth with loud ſhouts of joy; ſaying, "Glory to God in the higheſt; on earth peace, and "good will towards men."

Let us offer up ourſelves, our ſouls and bodies, not only to be ſaved, but to be ruled and governed by him; let us open our hearts and breaſts to receive and entertain this great friend, this glorious lover of our ſouls, and ſuffer him to take full poſſeſſion of them; and do thou "Almighty God, who haſt given us thy only begotten "ſon to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born "of a pure virgin; grant that we being regenerate, and made thy "children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy "holy ſpirit, through the ſame our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who liveth "and reigneth with thee and the ſame ſpirit, ever one God, world "without end. Amen."

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

Preparatory to SACRAMENT-SUNDAYS.

On the Holy Communion.

1 COR. XI. 24.

THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

AS a ſerious attention to a frequent participation of the HOLY COMMUNION hath ever been conſidered as a very important article of our religious duty, and on which our eternal ſalvation doth greatly depend, it cannot I think be too often or too warmly recommended to all and by all, and eſpecially by thoſe who are appointed by their office and miniſtry to deliver God's holy word and commandments. As often therefore and as fully as it hath been already ſpoken to by men of the greateſt piety, learning and abilities, it is no leſs my duty alſo to exhort you to the practice of it: I propoſe therefore in the following diſcourſe to lay before you:

FIRST, the great uſefulneſs and excellence of this divine inſtitution; and, SECONDLY, the obligations which we all lie under to comply with it. Firſt, then in regard to its great uſe and excellency. Such is the amazing baſeneſs and ingratitude of mankind, that though the leaſt and moſt trifling injuries done to them are very ſeldom, even long after they have been done, either forgot or for-

given: benefits on the other hand frequently conferred, are for the moſt part quickly and eaſily buried in oblivion. Our Saviour therefore who well knew that nature which he had aſſumed, after a life ſpent in the ſervice of man, wiſely foreſaw that his ſervants like others, when their maſter was gone away from them, would become every day more and more neglectful of thoſe commandments which he had left behind him, and in a long tract of time perhaps utterly forget every thing which he had done for them; to the end therefore that we ſhould always remember his exceeding great love in living and in dying for us, he inſtituted and ordained holy myſteries as pledges of his love and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endleſs comfort. As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do ſhew the Lord's death till he come. This do, ſays he, in remembrance of me. The religion of Chriſt none can object to as loaded with poſitive inſtitutions. Surely his yoke,—if ſuch we will term it,—is eaſy, his burthen,—if ſuch we will eſteem it,—is extremely light.—He might have ſaid—ye ſee how I afflict and torment myſelf for your ſakes, how I have faſted and prayed. Go therefore,—laſh and torment yourſelves, abſtain from food and nouriſhment, take no pleaſure, receive no comfort, ſeek nothing but ſorrow, acquaint yourſelves with nothing but grief. Do this in remembrance of me. But inſtead of this he only impoſeth on us this light and eaſy labour, a taſk which even carrys with it delight in the performance and pleaſure in the execution. Do this only in remembrance of me.—Now and then aſſemble yourſelves together and partake of this feaſt of love and charity which I have prepared for you:—Do this—as if he had ſaid to us.—If I have deſerved any thing at your hands; if whilſt upon earth my pleaſure and my buſineſs was to go about doing good to you; if in heaven I am now interceding for you, do not utterly forget your benefactor. Do not lay aſide all thoughts of your friend and mediator. Do not grudge a little time to converſe with me: remember me and I will

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not forget, will not leave nor forſake you: forgive each other before you come to this table, and when you riſe from it go home with chearfulneſs and be kind to, and love one another.

Thus we may ſuppoſe him graciouſly condeſcending to reaſon with us: this is the utmoſt extent of his requeſt and ſhall we, dare we deny a compliance with it. This do, ſays our Saviour, in remembrance of me. Amongſt all thoſe refined and delicate ſenſations which delight the generous and grateful mind, there is not one more productive of inward joy and ſatisfaction than the pleaſing recollection of thoſe benefits which have been conferred on us by our friends. With what joy do we reflect on the gift and on the giver? And with what pleaſure do we place before our eyes every minute circumſtance, every motion and geſture that accompanied it? What then ſhould be our praiſe and thankſgiving, what ſhould be our joy and pleaſure in calling to mind in the Holy Communion the amazing beneficence, goodneſs and condeſcenſion of our divine benefactor whom in this ſolemn office we aſſemble to commemorate? Is all that we ever received at the hands of others to be compared with that love which he expreſſed, or with thoſe bleſſings which he beſtowed upon us?

But beſides the firſt and great deſign of the holy ſacrament, namely, the commemoration of our Saviour's life, his ſufferings and death which muſt fill every grateful heart with an adoration of his goodneſs, and a veneration for his laws, there are alſo numberleſs advantages flowing to mankind from this divine inſtitution; and among others this is by no means the leaſt or moſt inconſiderable: namely, that if performed as it ought to be performed, it muſt of neceſſity tend to create mutual harmony, love, and affection among men. We ſee every day what great and uſeful deſigns have been carried on even by ſmall ſocieties of men whoſe views and intereſts have been the ſame, and who have united to ſerve and ſupport each other. The conditions we know required in every

worthy commmunicant are the previous laying aſide all ſtrife and envyings, all jealouſies, quarrels and animoſities. If any man ſays he loves God and hateth his brother he is a lyar. And again, firſt be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift. And doubtleſs neither our gifts nor we ourſelves ſhall be favourably received at the altar, unleſs we firſt baniſh malice and hatred from our hearts, and fill them with love and charity. The bleſſed ſacrament therefore ſhould be looked on by every worthy communicant as the bond of unity. The extenſive chain of love which links us to our fellow chriſtians, and which ſhould naturally remind us of that general relation which we bear to each other, ought to be conſtantly and ſteadily diſplaying itſelf in acts of mutual love, charity, and beneficence.

The rubrick, prefatory to the order of adminiſtration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, points out to us the exact duty both of prieſt and people in this particular. The miniſter is there, we ſee, inveſted with the power to enquire into the character and behaviour of all thoſe who would communicate, and to exhort them if they have been guilty of any flagrant and conſpicuous crimes, to repent and amend before they preſume to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. He is there empowered alſo to prevent thoſe, between whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign, to be partakers of that Holy Communion. Were he now to perform this pious office, to exert this power it might perhaps prove beneficial to ſociety in general, and advantageous to every particular member of it: it might be a means of preventing all thoſe cruel diviſions which ſeperate families, break friendſhips, and unlooſe the bonds of peace: it might promote private happineſs by reconciling friends and brethren, and preſerve public tranquillity by ending diſputes amicably without tedious and unprofitable law ſuits: ſo true and ſo inconteſtible is it, that in all nations where true chriſtian religion is eſtabliſhed, that aid and ſupport which is by the ſtate afforded to the church,

church, is amply repaid by thoſe reciprocal benefits which accrue to it from that ſupport; ſince the beſt way to enſure obedience to human laws is to enforce the divine. Were we punctually to perform the commandments of God, the ordinances of men would be almoſt unneceſſary, and our huge body of laws which has ſwelled to ſo enormous a bulk, might then be reduced to a very narrow compaſs.

With regard to the intrinſic excellency of this inſtitution, I ſhall here beg leave to obſerve, that it hath by a kind of interfering providence kept up and maintained its dignity and ſolemnity in ſpite of all oppoſition, and even in an age when ſcarce any other part of our religion has eſcaped the ridicule of ſcoffers. There is ſomething, to which indeed we are indebted, partly to the great reformers of our church, in the manner of the celebration of it, which inſpires an awe and veneration even in the moſt profligate and abandoned: it has indeed been ſaid—and what, that is falſe and impious, has not been ſaid by the enemies of our holy religion,—that thoſe who frequent the table of the Lord are hypocrites and diſſemblers; that they are equally baſe, corrupt and uncharitable after as they were before the performance of this duty. But this is an aſſertion without proof or foundation: for ſurely we may venture to affirm, and experience juſtifies it, that ſuch as do frequently attend the Holy Communion are ſeldom men of bad lives or characters. Weakneſſes and imperfections we are all liable to, but that a man can often receive the bleſſed ſacrament, repent of any known ſins, and yet continue to commit thoſe ſins: his conſcience every time reproaching him, as it muſt do for ſuch behaviour, is an inſtance of complicated, of confirmed impiety; it is uncharitable to ſuppoſe any man capable of: and it is withal moſt ridiculous and abſurd becauſe no worldly views could influence him to act thus, as every man at this time and in this nation is left,—perhaps too much ſo,—at liberty in this point: and in an age wherein piety is ſo little regarded or eſteemed,

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and the want of it ſo little cenſured, the mere affectation of it could anſwer no end or purpoſe whatſoever.

But further, men from the various and neceſſary diſtinctions in life, from rank fortune and profeſſion are ſeparated from each other, and there are ſome degrees in life which always keep them ſo: that is to ſay, the very high and very low: and here ariſes this misfortune, that the GREAT are proud and inſolent, the POOR mean and miſerable; the former triumph and oppreſs, the other ſink and deſpair; the one think themſelves above divine notice, the other look on themſelves as beneath it, extremes theſe both equally derogatory to the ſupreme power and goodneſs. Here then is an inſtitution, which, like that great leveller we all muſt feel, throws down diſtinction. To this feaſt all are invited, high and low, rich and poor one with another. There are indeed, but too many of thoſe whom fortune has placed in a ſuperior rank who affect to deſpiſe it. Thoſe whom gratitude calls on to be moſt thankful for benefits received are moſt forgetful of their benefactor, thoſe whoſe example could moſt influence the reſt of the world are too careleſs of their behaviour: or if we do now and then ſee them at the holy table it is becauſe they cannot avoid it: they are drawn by intereſt to a place where devotion could not carry them, and readily comply with human laws though they have neglected the divine. It happens in this, as in that feaſt mentioned by our Saviour, that the rich who are bidden will not come, they have farms, they have wives, they have pleaſures, they pray the Lord of the feaſt to have them excuſed. Whilſt from the ſtreets and lanes of the city come in the poor, and the houſe is filled with gueſts.

This is indeed the only table where all men of all orders, ranks and degrees can be admitted together, where nothing but innocence can enſure our welcome, and where all may be certain to meet with that reward which they deſerve. Let the conſideration therefore of the uſe, the importance, the excellency of this injunction induce us

to

to reflect ſeriouſly on what we propoſed, SECONDLY, to ſet before you, namely,

The obligations which we all lie under to comply with it.

And firſt then, this is the abſolute and poſitive command of our great Lord and Maſter Jeſus Chriſt, whom we all pretend to acknowledge as our ſovereign, that general under whom we fight, and who hath therefore the undoubted right to rule over us: to refuſe to obey his commands is treaſon and rebellion, flying in the face of him whom we have ſworn to ſerve,—him, who hath power to puniſh or to reward us. But if commands, however eaſy to be complied with, ſeem harſh and diſagreeable to our perverſe and obſtinate diſpoſitions, let us ſet the precept in a milder light, let us conſider it as the laſt requeſt of a dying friend, who, after a weariſome and wretched life ſpent in our ſervice, begs us but now and then to think of him, to call to mind his endeavour to oblige us: but this image as indeed all muſt be, is far beneath what it would repreſent: becauſe our bleſſed Saviour did more for us, for every one of us, than any one man could poſſibly do for another, and has therefore infinitely more right to our obedience. Can we forget a friend whoſe wiſdom is always ready to counſel, whoſe power is always exerted to defend us? Can we forget a friend who lived but to ſerve—who died but to redeem us; whoſe knowledge alone can make us happy here, and on whoſe interceſſion we muſt rely for eternal bliſs hereafter?

Shall we not then ſet apart a few hours to a grateful remembrance of that bounty to which we owe our whole lives? Can any table furniſh us with ſuch entertainment as the table of the Lord? Can any feaſt give us ſuch refined and ſuch exquiſite delight? If two or three of us come together on this occaſion, our Saviour will be in the midſt of us, he will preſide over the feaſt, he will receive his gueſts, he will promote every good thought in us, baniſh every evil one, enliven our charity, and make us worthy viſitants.

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In the purer ages of chriſtianity the euchariſt was always a daily part of the common prayer. They who lived then never omitted an opportunity of partaking of it, and though I am far from thinking it neceſſary to ſalvation that we ſhould exactly follow them therein, yet ſurely ſuch their zeal was infinitely preferable to the coldneſs and inſenſibility of theſe our days.

What are the moſt frequent cauſes of this it is perhaps very difficult to determine. Some I believe are unwilling, ſome are afraid, ſome are aſhamed to communicate. The fooliſh man ſets light by it, the weak man dreads it. The wicked man prophanes it. By daily converſe with an idle, ſelfiſh, luxurious world, we contract ſuch a levity and diſſipation of thought, that we cannot without great difficulty bring back our wandered ideas to any thing ſo ſolemn and ſo ſerious. That beſides the ſelf examination required is a diſagreeable work: nothing is ſo irkſome to an unjuſt ſteward as to be forced to look into and give up his accounts. He would fain put it off and promiſe by and by to ſettle once for all; or perhaps he ſays he knows his own weakneſs, if he repents now and communicates he fears he ſhall ſin again and ſecure to himſelf greater damnation. Some againare of jealous, bad, and unforgiving tempers, they would approach the holy table, but if they have been greatly injured, unjuſtly provoked, they cannot ſo readily pardon.—Men in ſhort never want excuſes either for doing what they ought not to do, or leaving undone what they ought: but thoſe things which appear right in our own eyes may not do ſo in thoſe of God. If he gives us the opportunity of reconciling ourſelves to him and we will not accept of it; doubtleſs as the ſcripture expreſſes it, it will repent him of his goodneſs towards us. If any of us then, my brethren, here aſſembled are deſirous, as many of you I hope are, of receiving the Holy Communion, let us I beſeech you prepare and fit ourſelves for this ſolemn occaſion. Caſt away then all unneceſſary fears and frivilous excuſes, all malice and hatred, all wicked and carnal deſires,

repent

repent ye truly of all your ſins, and reſolve to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways. Let us but make the reſolution and God will ſtrengthen it. It is better to come imperfect and ſinful as we are to the altar than not to come at all. God, we may reſt aſſured, will pardon our infirmities and compaſſionate our weakneſs. Let us give him our hearts, and he will clean and purify them, and then let us come to this heavenly feaſt with joy and gladneſs; for as God loveth the chearful worſhipper, he will animate our lifeleſs faith, invigorate our luke-warm zeal, remove all our doubts, and ſtrengthen all our good reſolutions. If we once approach his table, he will there conſider us as his gueſts, and will receive us with tenderneſs and affection, and if we behave ourſelves there with becoming zeal, purity and devotion, will one day admit us to a nobler feaſt in the kingdom of heaven, where all his faithful children ſhall meet to partake of one bleſſed communion in a ſtate of uninterrupted joy and everlaſting happineſs.

" That we may ſincerely apply ourſelves to ſerve God conſtantly " and diligently, in this and all the other inſtances that he hath " commanded us to the glory of his bleſſed name, and to our great " and inexpreſſible comfort; God of his infinite mercy grant, " through the merits and mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with " the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, three Perſons, and one God, be " aſcribed all majeſty, dominion and power, now and for ever " more. Amen."

SERMON XIV.

FOR A VISITATION.

An humble Remonſtrance in favour of the Parochial Clergy.

MATTHEW XI. 16, 17, 18, 19.

BUT WHEREUNTO SHALL I LIKEN THIS GENERATION? IT IS LIKE UNTO CHILDREN SITTING IN THE MARKETS, AND CALLING UNTO THEIR FELLOWS, AND SAYING, WE HAVE PIPED UNTO YOU, AND YE HAVE NOT DANCED: WE HAVE MOURNED UNTO YOU, AND YE HAVE NOT LAMENTED. FOR JOHN CAME NEITHER EATING NOR DRINKING, AND THEY SAY, HE HATH A DEVIL. THE SON OF MAN CAME EATING AND DRINKING, AND THEY SAY, BEHOLD, A MAN GLUTTONOUS AND A WINE BIBBER, A FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

OUR bleſſed Saviour not only in the text, but in various places and at various times, pathetically inveighs againſt the perverſeneſs of the Jews, with regard to their judgment both of himſelf, and the prophets before him; and I am perſuaded it is a matter of great grief to us all, that the ſame perverſe-

neſs is no leſs to be deplored by his miniſters in theſe times, and in this nation in particular.

I am not inſenſible, that it is a very tender point for a clergyman to expatiate on the ill treatment of the clergy :—there is ſomething within that gives a check to ſuch an attempt, a ſort of modeſty, not eaſily to be deſcribed, ſomething a kin to that which a well tutored mind feels at revealing its private griefs and diſtreſſes ;—and moreover to call for reſpect to our office at this time of day, may be liable to a bad conſtruction, and what St. Paul thought himſelf concerned to do out of conſcience, may be ſuppoſed in us to proceed from no very commendable principle, for theſe reaſons I am ſatisfied that the generality of my brethren would diſapprove of an attempt of this kind were the ill conſequences ariſing from ſuch behaviour confined to themſelves.—But when they reflect how grievouſly religion ;—nay morality, and conſequently ſociety in general ſuffer through our ſides,—I am perſuaded that not only they,—but even the candid part of the LAITY, will hold it at leaſt excuſeable. I ſhall therefore without any further preface, enter upon the ſubject I have propoſed to myſelf ; and ſhew in the

FIRST place, that a faithful and conſcientious diſcharge of the duties of our miniſtry is a work of the higheſt importance, and attended with great difficulty and labour.

In the SECOND, I ſhall briefly enumerate the many diſcouragements the Parochial clergy meet with in this age, and ſhew that from theſe diſcouragements in a great meaſure proceed the preſent ill ſtate of morality and religion.

Theſe ARTICLES when duly ſpoken to, will prepare the way for a ſhort addreſs both to the CLERGY and the PEOPLE, with which I propoſe to conclude.

To the FIRST particular, namely, That a faithful and conſcientious diſcharge of the duties of our miniſtry is a work of the laſt importance, and attended with great difficulty and labour.

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For the man of God, in order to be thoroughly qualified for his employment, muſt devote great part of his time to his ſtudies, his knowledge muſt be very extenſive; he muſt ſcarce be a ſtranger to any one art or ſcience; he muſt acquire many of the languages, be able to make reſearches into the records of antiquity with critical exactneſs, and be well acquainted with the mazes of philoſophy.—In the days of ignorance, indeed, a ſuperficial knowledge was of great avail, and the light of it ſhone marvellouſly bright amidſt ſuch conſummate darkneſs; but in this enlightened and refined age, theſe high accompliſhments are required in a miniſter, and he himſelf ſhould with unwearied diligence ſtrive to attain them, that he may do juſtice and credit to religion, virtue and truth, and remove the diſguiſes of ſcience falſely ſo called; that he may ſecure thoſe under his care, from the attacks that will be made by the diſingenuous artifices, and cunning craftineſs of thoſe who lie in wait to deceive.—And thus the courſe of his ſtudies will never be at an end, whilſt he has life and vigour to purſue them.

But it may be aſked,—is it a duty incumbent on every clergyman to arrive at theſe heights of knowledge?—The words of our Saviour upon another occaſion, ſhall be my anſwer to this queſtion,—"All men cannot receive this ſaying, ſave they to whom "it is given."—The miniſters of the goſpel are like to the ſervants in the parable, whoſe talents are of a very different value: the improvements therefore of every one will differ, and ought only to be proportionable to the value of his talents.—The rule by which all of them muſt act and account is this, every man according to his ability.—They muſt loſe no time, and ſpare no pains: they muſt do all they can to profit and improve.

Whoſoever among them has a natural genius of great extent, and moreover is indulged by Providence with means, ſtation and opportunities to enlarge it by all ſorts of learning and experience, his

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ſoul muſt not reſt ſatisfied, without the perfection of human knowledge.—As for thoſe whoſe natural abilities are of a lower claſs, and whoſe improvements are alſo depreſſed by laborious cures, narrowneſs of fortune, want of books, and opportunity of converſing with a variety of men; they will go far enough, I conceive, if they lay up from ſcripture, and ſuch few books as they may have opportunity of conſulting, ſuch a ſtore of uſeful knowledge only, as may ſupply the wants, ſatisfy the ſcruples, and remove the prejudices of thoſe who live within their reſpective cures.

Every paſtor of the church, however, ſhould be qualified for a preacher, and be able, upon all occaſions, to ſuit his inſtructions to the capacities of his hearers; but indeed he need not be overſolicitous about embelliſhing his diſcourſes from the pulpit, with the beauties of rhetoric, provided the doctrine of them be plain and uſeful;—if he but ſpeak the language of the heart,—he will find that language has more eloquence than any ſtudied phraſes, and that it carries with it ſuch a degree of perſuaſion, as can ſcarcely be reſiſted.

Nor is it ſufficient to have ſo much learning and ſkill as will qualify him for publick preaching or private inſtruction. He muſt follow after, and attain to more ſhining qualities,—namely,—RIGHTEOUSNESS,—GOODNESS,—FAITH,—LOVE,—PATIENCE and MEEKNESS.—He muſt be of HONEST REPORT, FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST AND WISDOM;—his wiſdom muſt be ſuch as will recommend him to the conſcience and affections of every man in the ſight of God; as will carry him with integrity and applauſe through every embarraſſment, alteration, and trial in worldly concerns.—He muſt have a perfect command over his paſſions, becauſe his life will be one continued ſtruggle, with all the prejudices and infirmities of human nature; with creatures of a ſtrange temper—ſo ſtrange as themſelves to oppoſe their own happineſs.—HE MUST WARN THEM THAT ARE UNRULY, COMFORT THE FEEBLE

FEEBLE MINDED, SUPPORT THE WEAK, AND BE GENTLE AND PATIENT TOWARD ALL MEN.—He muſt be endued with ſufficient courage to do the kind, though ungrateful office of reproving every vice,—and, if poſſible, he muſt do it, in ſuch obliging terms, and with ſo diſcrete a regard to time, place, perſon, and diſpoſition, that no man may eſteem him his enemy becauſe he tells him the truth.

Such, MY BRETHREN, are the labours of our calling;—Nor is the danger leſs; for we labour, as they who muſt give an account for ſouls; for immortal ſpirits, which if loſt, are loſt eternally.—Now will not every miniſter of the goſpel, under the conſciouſneſs of ſo heavy a charge, cry out with Saint Paul,—Who is ſufficient for theſe things?—Ought not all of us, following the ſteps of ſome of the ancient fathers, to have fled from ordination?—Would it not be prudent, even now, for us to decline the duties of this hazardous profeſſion?—But what ſhall we ſay, if over and above the neceſſary and unavoidable labour and danger of our calling, we have to ſtruggle with the perverſeneſs of mens judgments in relation to our behaviour, the injuſtice and cruelty of too many of our reſpective pariſhioners in regard to our income; and the amazing contempt and deriſion with which they receive the doctrines we are ſent to preach.

There is little need to inſiſt upon proof of the perverſeneſs of mankind, of their unwillingneſs both to do what is right, and to believe what is true.—We may appeal for it to the prophets,—to Chriſt himſelf, and his apoſtles, who all complain of an unkind reception; of the obſtinacy, and wickedneſs of the people.—The ſacred chronicles are filled with examples of this nature. God ſent all his ſervants, prophet after prophet, daily riſing up betimes, and ſending them; becauſe he had compaſſion on his people, and his dwelling-place:—But they hearkened not unto him, nor inclined their ears; but hardened their neck, mocking his meſſengers,

gers, and miſuſing his prophets :—Every generation did worſe than their fathers.

And in our Saviour's time, the ſame ſpirit of perverſeneſs which appeared ſo remarkably in the Jews, in the beginning, ſtill continued in the corrupt part of that nation, ſo as to render ineffectual all the methods of divine wiſdom to bring them to repentance.—" Whereunto ſhall I liken this generation, ſays our bleſſed " Lord and maſter, in the words I have choſen for my text.—It " is like unto children ſitting in the markets, and calling unto their " fellows, and ſaying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not " danced :—We have mourned unto you, and ye have not la- " mented ; for John came neither eating nor drinking, and they " ſay he hath a devil.—The Son of man came eating and drink- " ing ; and they ſay, Behold ! a man gluttonous, and a wine- " bibber ; a friend of publicans and ſinners."

The only uſe I propoſe to make of the text, and ſuch other paſſages of ſcripture as I have been producing, is only to ſhew, that it is ſo far from being abſurd to complain of the ill-reception we and our labours meet with from a perverſe generation ;—that on the contrary, we have the example of almoſt all the prophets ; and to ſtrengthen theirs, our bleſſed Lord himſelf frequently and pathetically intereſts his diſciples and followers with diſcourſes on that ſubject.—I preſume, therefore, I need no better authority to juſtify the article I am entering upon.—God forbid ! I ſhould ſay more ; nay, ſo much as with truth and juſtice I might on this ſubject.

I ſhall only, as I at firſt propoſed, briefly enumerate the many diſcouragements the Parochial clergy meet with in this age, and ſhew that from theſe diſcouragements, in a great meaſure proceed the preſent ill ſtate of morality and religion.

The clergy muſt be choſen out of the human race, and it is ſufficient if they be men as well as qualified for that truſt as can be procured.

procured.—They will and muſt have like paſſions and infirmities as their fellow-creatures;—their perfections will not riſe above the common ſtandard of our nature.—It is therefore impoſſible, in ſo numerous a community, but there muſt be ſome who will do diſcredit to their office:—and it is no ſmall diſcouragement, that the generality of men are ſo apt to take their eſtimate from ſuch unworthy members. It is this raſh this ungenerous method of judging that has been the ſource of all that low and mean abuſe which has of late years been ſo illiberally beſtowed upon the clergy, and which would be too contemptible for our notice; were it not for the inferences which ignorant and fooliſh men are ſo unhappy as to draw from thence, and which have done great diſervice to religion:—The ſucceſs even of truth depends no doubt, in a great meaſure, upon the reputation of its advocates; for the generality of mankind are more influenced by appearance than reality; ſo that when a man is depreciated and ridiculed in his office, he can hardly expect to do any great good in the excution of it.—The people muſt be prepared no leſs than the preacher: for the beſt arguments will loſe much of their force, if there be not a proper diſpoſition to receive them: where prejudice bars up the aſſent, the weight of the matter, and the addreſs with which it is managed is ſcarcely felt; for perſuaſiveneſs is the effect of eſteem: it is with reluctance that we learn conduct from thoſe we contemn; intelligence from ſuch a quarter is often thought impracticable, as well as unpleaſant.—To entertain a contemptible opinion of any perſon renders his friendſhip weak, and puts him under an incapacity of doing any good.—Little notions and unfavourable prepoſſeſſions give an ill tincture to the judgment, and keep men from ſeeing things in their true light; and thus good arguments and wholeſome advice are often rejected for want of character and recommendation.—Crafty men ſee the truth of this remark, and they would fain perſuade the world, that the clergy gain no creditable addition by their office; they make it their

buſineſs to miſrepreſent the miniſters of religion; to depreſs their authority, and decry the uſefulneſs of their profeſſion: and when they have diſarmed the clergy of their reputation, they think they have gained a mighty point. From hence-forward they hope to purſue their pleaſure without controul, and their vices without any infamy or reproach.

The ill-ſtate of religion we have all reaſon to lament; and were it not that worldly intereſt too often interpoſes, I believe we might be more ſerviceable in our reſpective cures than fatal experience convinces us we are at preſent: for when mean ſpirited men think they can ſave their contributions either in whole or in part, by being upon ill terms with their miniſter, a very ſlight matter ſhall give great diſguſt.

But ſetting aſide all matters of generoſity, give me leave to obſerve, that TYTHES never were the property of thoſe gentlemen to whom the eſtates belong. They were given to the church by thoſe who had an abſolute right to diſpoſe of them; and could no more deſcend to them, than to me; ſuppoſing that the eſtates had continued in the ſame families ever ſince.—But moſt of them, if not all, have long ago changed maſters; and as the purchaſers paid for no more than nine parts, as the farmers hire no more than nine parts, the TYTHE is not paid by them; becauſe it never was part of their poſſeſſions.—They, in reality, pay nothing but occaſional perquiſites, which are a mere trifle.

TYTHES are a real eſtate; not a matter of bounty or contribution: and it is too notorious to be denied, that the beſt and moſt valuable are in the hands of the LAITY.

Upon the whole, there never was any nation ſo much indebted to God's good providence as we are for natural, civil, and religious bleſſings, and yet none ever gave ſo little in acknowledgment of them, and for the ſupport of his worſhip, as we have given ſince the reformation.—No clergy, ever ſince the eſtabliſhment of chriſti-

anity

anity ever deſerved ſo well of the community as the eſtabliſhed clergy of theſe kingdoms have merited on many accounts; and yet no eſtabliſhed clergy, in the whole chriſtian world, ever were in general ſo poorly rewarded.

Nothing now remains but to make the beſt application I can: ſuch as may concern and affect us all, whether MINISTERS or PEOPLE.

And firſt to the PEOPLE.

Want of generoſity in other reſpects, is by no means a characteriſtic of this age.—Suffer me then to admoniſh you of the cruelty of detaining a maintenance from thoſe who have dedicated their whole lives to the ſpiritual welfare of others. How is it poſſible, do ye think, that they can ſpeak to the conſciences and conditions of their congregations; ſince when they ſhould be employed in framing the moſt moving and earneſt perſuaſions to turn men to repentance and newneſs of life, they are forced perhaps to be contriving for a wretched ſupply for the neceſſities of their families: and this I doubt not, may be one reaſon for the ill-conduct of ſome of our order: though I grant no reaſon can excuſe an irregular courſe of life; yet you cannot but know, that ſorrow, grief and diſappointment, without the particular grace of God, are apt to make men run into follies they would, perhaps, have otherwiſe been aſhamed of.

I ſhall be very ſhort in my addreſs to thoſe who labour with me in the Goſpel; becauſe I am duly ſenſible, there is ſcarce one of my brethren whoſe imagination will not ſuggeſt to him much more than I ſhall be willing to ſay on this occaſion.—Suffer me, however, a few words.—If then we are convinced, as, indeed, we cannot fail of being ſo, that diſregard to us hath greatly encreaſed the diſregard to public worſhip and inſtruction: that many are grown

prejudiced againſt religion: many more indifferent about and unacquainted with it:—then we have great reaſon to think ſeriouſly what our duty on this occaſion is, and to ſtir up each other to the performance of it. As we are miniſters of Chriſt let us ever act according to that character; endeavouring to be as perfect as we can be in this imperfect ſtate: let us ſee that our tempers and lives be ſuch, as we ſay thoſe of other perſons ſhould be:—for if we who teach religion, live with little or no ſenſe of religion ourſelves, what can we poſſibly expect, but that men will improve ſo palpable an advantage againſt us, to the utmoſt. Let us therefore go before our people in the paths of virtue, recommending to them every chriſtian grace by our example, thus proving beyond diſpute that our converſation is in heaven.

Great pains have been taken by our adverſaries to give the world an ill opinion of religious inſtruction: and we therefore, beſides behaving well ourſelves, muſt take equal pains to inſpire them with a good opinion of the chriſtian doctrine, by repreſenting to them both the natural influence it hath, and the divine authority that enjoins it. —But after all, the only effectual conviction will be that of experience; and therefore the chief point is to endeavour that men may feel the benefit of our teaching: feel at leaſt that it is their own fault, not ours, if they do not become wiſer, better and happier for it: that alone is a good ſermon, which finds its way, not to the approbation only, but to the very ſoul of the tranſgreſſor; leaves a ſting in his heart, and infuſes into it ſuch a diſpoſition as expreſſes itſelf, not altogether in encomiums upon the ſpeakers eloquence; but ſuch a one, as makes one take a pleaſure in being affrighted, dejected, diſmayed, confounded and ſubdued. That alone is a good ſermon, which in ſhort, imitates God in his action upon the heart of a ſinner, which he firſt enlightens, and then enlivens with his grace, and ſo ſubdues it.

But

But over and above a religious deportment, and a due care ſo to ſpeak as that we preach JESUS CHRIST and not ourſelves. We ſhould take great care in another point; namely, that we not only are, but appear to be in a reaſonable degree diſintereſted. A large proportion indeed, of the clergy have too much cauſe to endeavour at bettering their circumſtances; and it is barbarous treatment to accuſe inſtead of pitying them for it. But over-great ſolicitude and contrivance for advancing ourſelves will always make impreſſions to our prejudice let our condition be ever ſo low. Nor will it be ſufficient that we avoid the charge of immoderately deſiring more; unleſs we avoid alſo that of ſelfiſhneſs in the management of what we have already; a matter in which it is very difficult, and yet very important to give no offence. After what has been ſaid in another part of this diſcourſe, I need not add, that we are bound in conſcience and honeſty; both to thoſe who belong to us, and thoſe who ſhall come after us, to take a proper care of our legal dues; and preſerve them faithfully from the encroachments of ſuch as tell us, very truly, that we ought not to be worldly minded; but forget what is equally as true, that they themſelves ought not to be ſo. But then the ſtrongeſt reaſons of all kinds oblige us never to make unjuſt or litigious claims: never to do any thing either hard, rigorous, mean or ſordid: to ſhew we deſire always the moſt eaſy and amicable method of ending diſputes: and whatever methods we may be forced to take, never let any thing force us into the leaſt degree of unfairneſs, paſſion or ill will: but endeavour by all inſtances of friendly behaviour to win, if poſſible, upon the perſon we have to do with; at leaſt to convince every one elſe how very far we are from intending wrong to him or any one beſides. Now nothing will contribute more to acquit us from the ſuſpicion of being ſelfiſh in our dealings than approving ourſelves charitable to the poor, and maintaining decent hoſpitality, if our circumſtances will

permit. And then notwithſtanding the cenſures of thoſe who complain we are of little uſe, and endeavour to make us of none: we may ſurely well hope both to render ourſelves acceptable to God, and uſeful to mankind. AMEN.

F I N I S.